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COVER 1 of 2

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the comics magazine • 86

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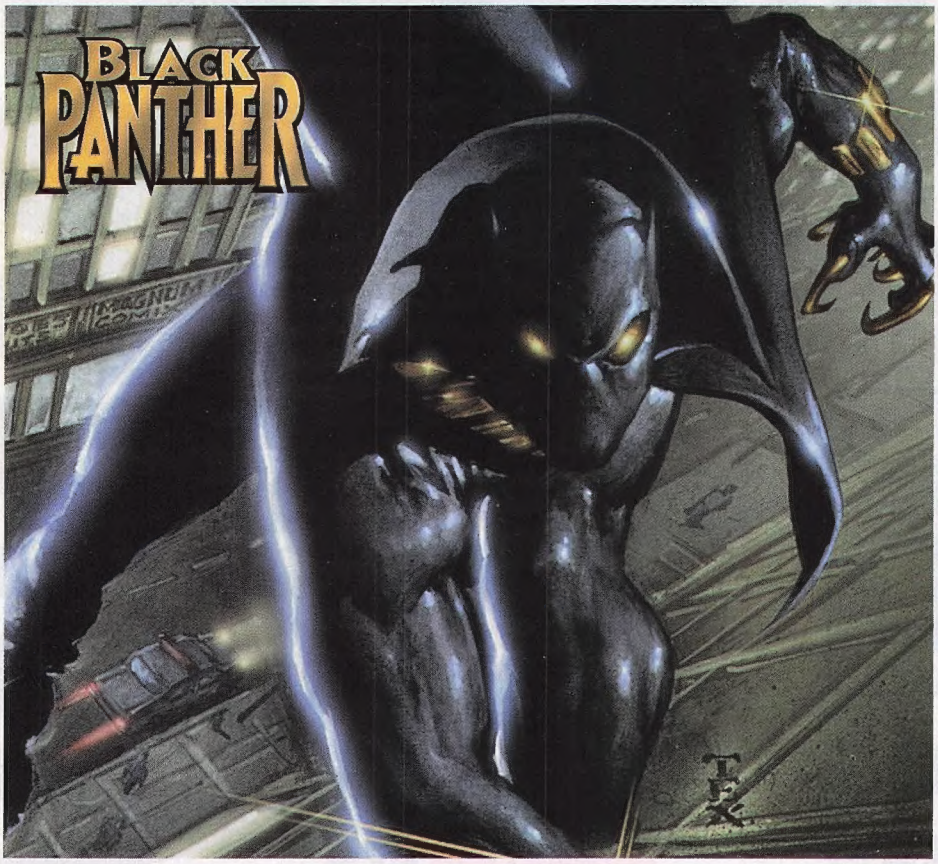
THE DEVIL DAREDEVIL#1

THE ROYAL FAMILY INHUMANS#1

THE KING BLACK PANTHER#1



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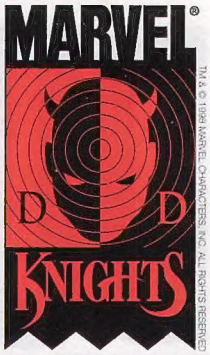

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DUSK

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COULD YOU RAVE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE?

PRODIGY

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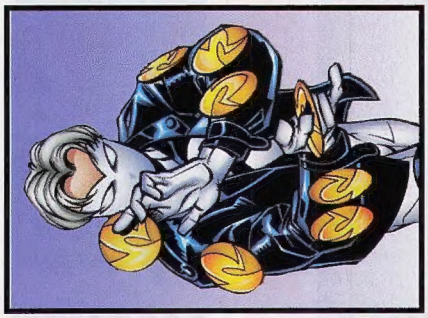
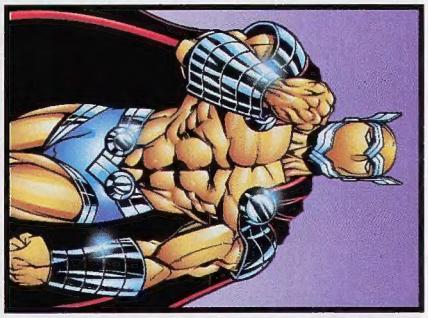
BUT WOULD YOU FOLLOW SOMEONE ON THE EDGE?

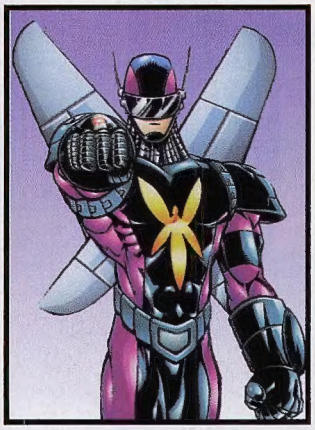


WHO ARE THE SLINGERS?



RICOCHET

HE JUST FOUND OUT HE'S A MUTANT.
WHO COULD YOU TRUST WITH THIS SECRET?



HORNET

IT'S ONLY THE SUIT THAT HAS ANY POWER.
IS THAT ALL YOU NEED TO BE A HERO?

SLINGERS #1 JOE HARRIS • CHRISCROSS • ROB STULL
48-PAGE PREMIERE ISSUE • ON SALE OCTOBER 28

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• INHUMANS#1
Paul Jenkins & Jae Lee
• PUNISHER#1
Christopher Golden, Tom Sniegoski, Bernie Wrightson & Jimmy Palmiotti
• BLACK PANTHER#1
Christopher Priest & Mark Texeira
This SEPtEMBER, Believing is Seeing
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UNCANNY X-MEN #361
GAMBIT RETURNS
Steve Seagle • Steve Skroce!

X-MEN #81
THE SEARCH FOR XAVIER BEGINS...
Joe Kelly • Adam Kubert

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X-MEN: LIBERATORS #1 (OF 4)
WOLVERINE, NIGHTCRAWLER & COLOSSUS!
Joe Harris • Phil Jimenez

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #441
PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #97
SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #263
PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #98
Mackie • Kayanan • Romita Jr. • Ross

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BELIEVING IS SEEING

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September Highlights from the House of Ideas!

On Sale September 2

- ☐ **Blade #1 (of 6)**
  If you're a vampire, he's got a stake in your future!
- ☐ **Cable #60**
  "The Nemesis Contract" Part 2! Art by Ladronn!
- ☐ **Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty #3**
  Mark Waid and Ron Garney take Cap back to W.W. II!
- ☐ **Captain America: Sentinel Of Liberty #1: Roughcut Edition**
  Mark Waid's original plot and Ron Garney's original pencils!
- ☐ **Doctor Who #269**
  The ongoing official guide to the Doctor!
- ☐ **Fantastic Four #11**
  Who can survive...the Crucible?!?
- ☐ **Ka-Zar #19**
  Gregor, the mentor of Kraven, returns!
- ☐ **Marvel Halloween: The Supernaturals Tour Book**
  The exclusive behind-the-scenes preview!
- ☐ **Rampaging Hulk #4**
  Who's stronger, Bruce Banner or an avalanche?!?
- ☐ **Sensational Spider-Man #33**
  "The Gathering Of The Five" Part 5!
- ☐ **Spider-Girl #2 (MC2)**
  Trapped between Darkdevil and Crazy Eight!
- ☐ **Sunfire & Big Hero 6 #3 (of 3)**
  The Conclusion! Written by Scott Lobdell!
- ☐ **Thor #5**
  Thor gets bashed by the critics! What gives?
- ☐ **Uncanny X-Men #361**
  The Return Of Gambit!
- ☐ **X-Men: The Manga #16**
  Double-Sized Issue!

On Sale September 9

- ☐ **A-Next #2 (MC2)**
  The morning after! The Next Generation Of Avengers Bring On The Bad Guys!
- ☐ **Alpha Flight #16**
  The Brass Bishop strikes!
- ☐ **The Amazing Spider-Man #441**
  "The Final Chapter" Part 1
- ☐ **Daredevil #1**
  Kevin Smith! Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti! The beginning of a whole new era in the life of the Man Without Fear!
- ☐ **Generation X #44**
  A member of the team is forced to leave!
- ☐ **Iron Man #10**
  Guest-starring the Avengers!
- ☐ **Marvel Universe #6**
  Starring the Monster Hunters!
- ☐ **Mutant X #2**
  Havok meets this universe's version of the Fantastic Four!
- ☐ **The Time Slip Collection**
  From the pages of Marvel Vision, the industry's most unique artists reimagine the Marvel Universe!
- ☐ **Wolverine #130**
  Can Logan survive the Wendigo?

On Sale September 16

- ☐ **Black Panther #1**
  Christopher Priest! Mark Texeira! The real king of the jungle leaves Wakanda for the urban jungle!
- ☐ **Captain America #11**
  "American Nightmare" Part 3!
- ☐ **Heroes For Hire #17**
  Are Luke Cage and She-Hulk an item?
- ☐ **Incredible Hulk # 470**
  Featuring the art of Ed McGuinness!
- ☐ **J2 #2 (MC2)**
  The Son of Juggernaut vs. the X-People?!?
- ☐ **Peter Parker: Spider-Man #97**
  "The Final Chapter" Part 2! Art by JR., JR.
- ☐ **Strange Tales #3**
  Man-Thing and Werewolf By Night! 64 Pages! Cover by Neal Adams!
- ☐ **Thunderbolts #20**
  The T-Bolts vs. The Masters Of Evil?
- ☐ **What If?! #114**
  What if the heroes never returned from the Secret Wars?
- ☐ **X-Man #44**
  His enemy's identity revealed!
- ☐ **X-Men #81**
  Adam Kubert draws the team as the Search for Xavier begins...!
- ☐ **X-Men: Crossroads TPB**
  Collecting UNCANNY X-MEN #273-277 by Chris Claremont and Jim Lee! Featuring the StarJammers, Nick Fury, Ka-Zar, Magneto and more!

On Sale September 23

- ☐ **Alpha Flight/Inhumans '98**
  Vindicator gets exposed to the Terrigen Mists! 48 Pages! Art by Tom Raney!
- ☐ **Blade #2 (of 6)**
  Guest-starring Morbius! Written by Don McGregor!
- ☐ **Cable #61**
  "The Nemesis Contract" Part 3
- ☐ **Deadpool #22**
  Guest-starring Cable!
- ☐ **Punisher #1 (of 4)**
  Christopher Golden and Tom Sniegoski! Bernie Wrightson and Jimmy Palmiotti! Featuring a Frank Castle you've never seen before!
- ☐ **Spectacular Spider-Man #263**
  "The Final Chapter" Part 3!
- ☐ **Spider-Man Unlimited #22**
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  Beware the Grim Reaper!
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  Caught between an evil Sorceress and an ancient dragon!
- ☐ **Dr. Who #270**
  The Official Guide to the longest-running Science Fiction series of all time continues...!
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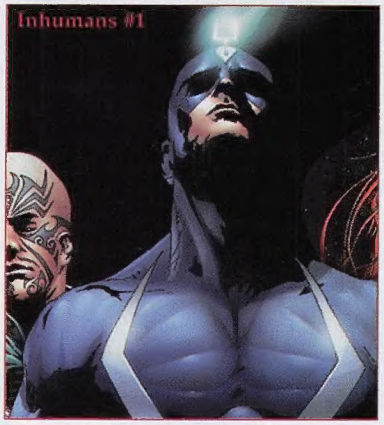
  Paul Jenkins! Jae Lee! The most enigmatic race of all time are in a race against time! Featuring Black Bolt, Medusa, Karnak, Triton, Gorgon and Crystal!



- ☐ **Marvel #6**
  The official all-new, all-different Marvel catalogue!
- ☐ **Nighthawk #3 (of 3)**
  Guest-starring Daredevil!
- ☐ **Peter Parker, Spider-Man #98**
  "The Final Chapter" Part 4
- ☐ **Quicksilver #13**
  Will Quicksilver claim the legacy of Magneto?
- ☐ **Silver Surfer #146**
  The return of Firelord!
- ☐ **X-Force #83**
  Guest-starring Cannonball!
- ☐ **X-Men: Liberators #1 (of 4)**
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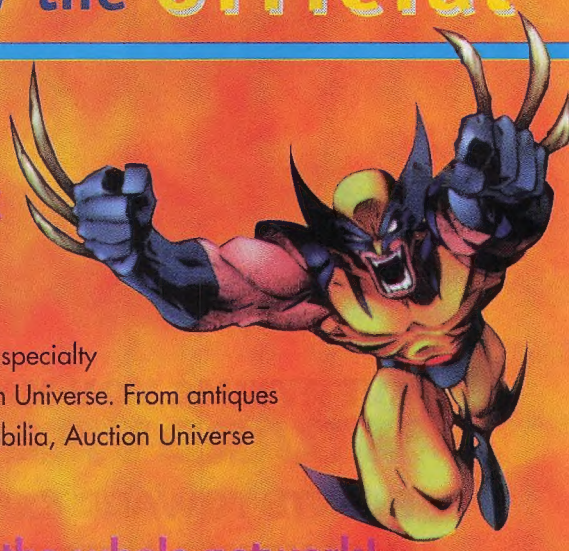

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Songs of the Witchblade

A Soundtrack to the Comic Book

Composed, curated, cobbled, and controlled by Kat Bjelland (of Babes in Toyland)

Music by: Babes in Toyland, Peter Steele (Type O Negative), Buzz Osborne (The Melvins), Sun Circus, The Creatures, Chris Vrenna, Alexis, Johnny, and Scott (Girls Against Boys), Steve Duda, Rave Ogilvie, Mimi Goese, Hope Nicholls, Jim Thirwell (Foetus), Miho Hatori (Cibo Matto), Arto Lindsay (DNA), Kim Fox, Lydia Lunch, special guests, & Eric Bogosian as D. Gavin Taylor

Conceived by Michael Turner, David Wohl, Christina Z., and Kat Bjelland

Produced and Mixed by Dave "Rave" Ogilvie

(Thanks for the loan Puppy and Trent)

Executive Producers Marc Silvestri and Brad Foxhoven (Top Cow Productions) and Tim Carr(Dreamworks Records)

www.dreamworks.com/witchblade
www.topcow.com

OF THE WITCHBLADE

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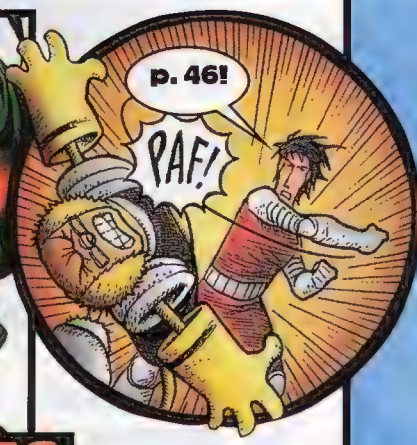
WIZARD contents

THE COMICS MAGAZINE • NUMBER 86 • OCTOBER 1998



FEATURES

40 FIRST LOOK: THE INCREDIBLE HULK
Take a gander at the green goliath's newest look and direction courtesy of John Byrne and Ron Garney. **By Chris Hutchins and Matthew Senreich**

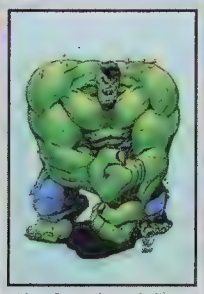
42 TEMPORARY INSANITY
Think it's easy being a *Wizard* intern? Check out our intern's war journal to see just what a typical day for a lackey is like. **By Chris Hutchins as told to the *Wizard* Staff**

46 STRIP TEASE: AKIKO
Check out the spunkiest li'l 5th grader and her cosmic friends in a hilarious three-page Akiko strip. **By Mark Crilley**

50 THE WIZARD Q&A: MARVEL KNIGHTS
Film director/writer Kevin Smith joins forces with comic artists Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti to give *Daredevil* a grittier feel. **By Matthew Senreich**

56 CLARK CAN'T
Wizard breaks down the Superman titles' current problems and how we'd fix them. **By the *Wizard* Staff**

ON THE COVERS



Daredevil was illustrated by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, and colored by Brian Haberlin. Sense your way to **page 50** to see what Quesada, Palmiotti and Kevin Smith have planned for ol' horn head and the entire "Marvel Knights" imprint. **The Incredible Hulk** (right) was illustrated by Mike Wieringo and colored by Liquid Graphics. To see what the new team of John Byrne and Ron Garney have planned for the green goliath, pound your way to **page 40**.

Stuff, p. 92

CONTESTS

86 DC ONE MILLION
Create your own *Wizard* One Million cover, and you could walk away with original art from DC's upcoming One Million mini-series, along with tons of comics and other cool loot.

106 KABUKI
You're a poet and you don't even know it! Write us up a quick li'l number and you could walk away with an original David Mack painted *Kabuki* cover.

STANDARDS

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JLA Casting Call, p. 64

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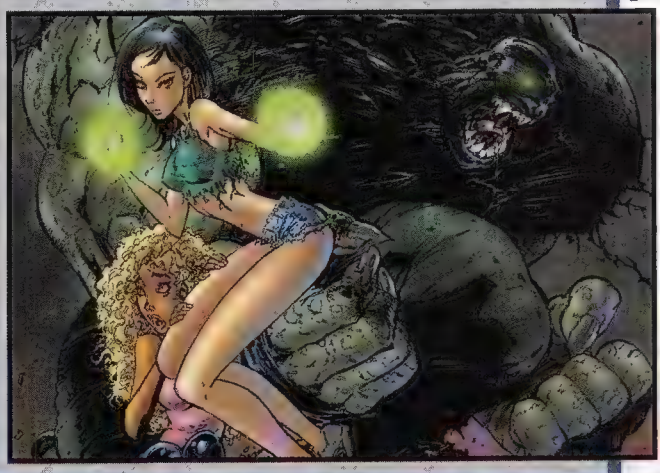
COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

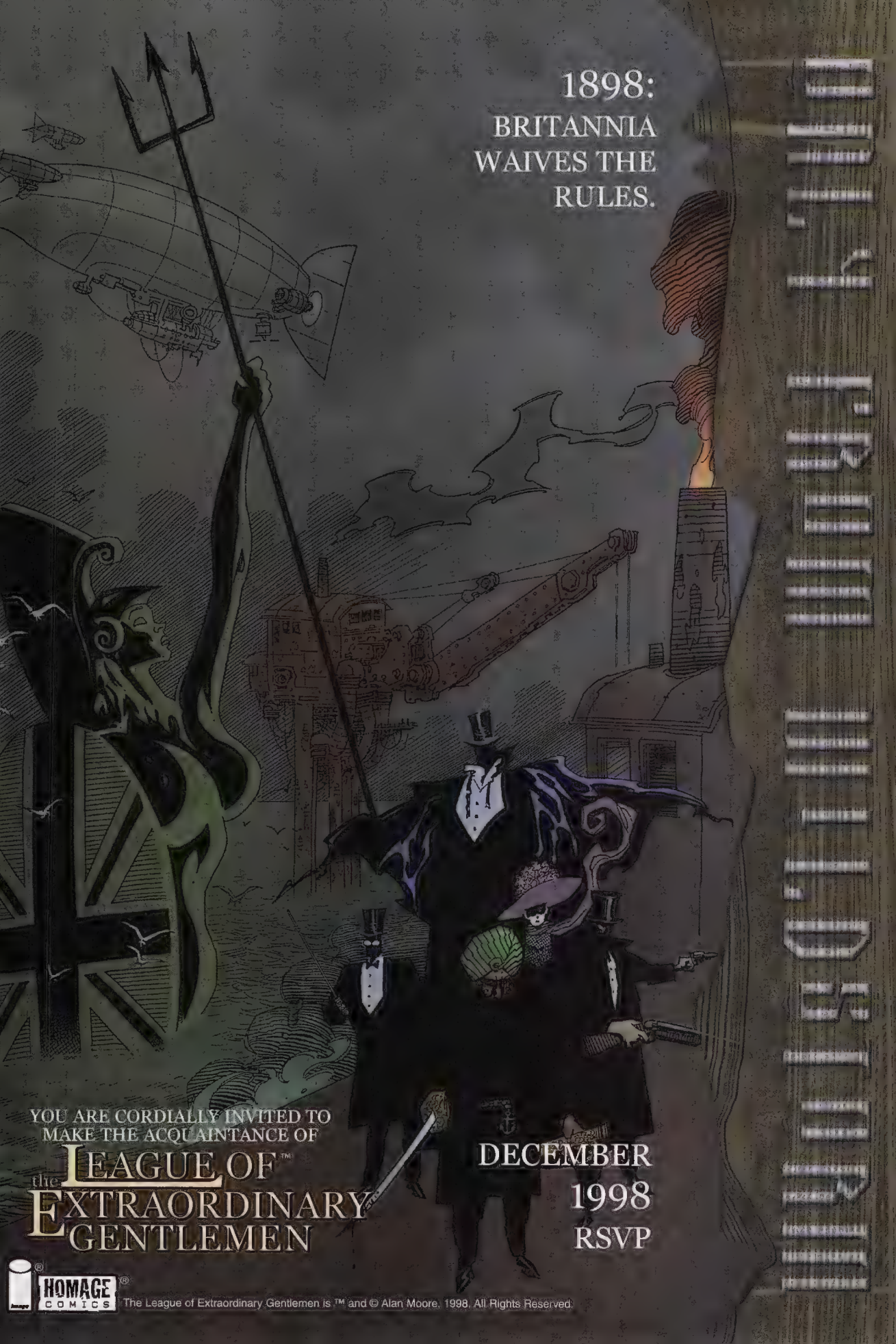
EXCLUSIVE OFFER

THE TENTH #1/2

Booyah! Here's your only chance to get the exclusive *The Tenth* #1/2 comic featuring a killer in-continuity story that bridges the gap between the mini-series and current storyline with Espy and the Tenth, by Tony Daniel and Steve Scott! Head over to **page 80**.

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHRADER

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Travis and Friend
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"SAY, JOE—DO THE WORDS 'THIRD WHEEL' RING A BELL?"

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

In the magazine business there's two things we always try to get our fans to do: 1. Buy the magazine once and 2. buy it again. I always laugh when I say it or hear it, but it's true.

At *Wizard*, to get you to buy the magazine once, we concentrate on the cover, the #1/2 offers, the inserts, the contests and the theme or cover story. We spend a whole lot of time on the cover. This is where I personally spend more time than any other part of the magazine. The cover is the first thing you see—it's got to catch your eye. We try to line up the #1/2 offers by as much as a year in advance. This is a great way to get fans of a particular comic to pick up *Wizard*. The inserts are also a cool way for us to attract fans of a particular title or character. We've got some really great inserts lined up like #0 comic editions, sketchbooks and landmark editions. We got great feedback from the "Earth X" and "Marvel Knights" sketchbook inserts. There's more on the way. Contests and themes are also a way to attract fans to pick up an issue of *Wizard*.

The second part (getting you to buy *Wizard* again) is all up to the job we do inside the magazine. Once you've bought *Wizard*, we want you to have a great time. That's editorial's job: To keep the magazine fun, interesting and exciting, and keep you coming back for more.

Well, this month we have lots of what I just wrote about. Check it out. We've got a great interview with the creative forces behind the new Marvel Knights *Daredevil* comic: Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti and Kevin Smith! Then *Wizard* breaks down the Superman titles' current problems and how we'd fix them. We also offer a sneak peek at what it's like to be a *Wizard* intern, and take a look at the brand-new John Byrne and Ron Garney Hulk. All I can say is he's big. And finally, we have a "Strip Tease" this month looking at a great comic called *Akiko*.

See ya next month!

Gareb S. Shamus

MASTHEAD

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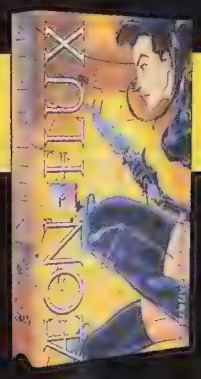

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MAGIC WORDS

THE THING'S 'THING'... KURT BUSIEK GETS GROUNDED... AND SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT!

Stuff to get us started:

• "Spicy Girls," the fabulous comic babes feature from *Wizard* #83 seems to have gone over amazingly well with alla youse. Hey, it had all-new Joseph Michael Linsner art. What's not to like?

• The ever-present Hal Jordan/Kyle Rayner "Green Lantern" debate rages on! I'm still getting hundreds of letters a month on it with no end in sight.

• Verily, the mail hath come in and told us that Marvel's new *Thor* series doth kick butt! In a related story, *Battle Chasers* doth kick tail, too.

• The Mountain View Comic Book Club of Stoney Creek, Ontario, is made up of a bunch of lovely people. I got all your letters and I thank you much for them.

• Kung-pao chicken has absolutely nothing to do with comic books or mail we've been getting, but *damn* is it fun to say! Say it with me: Kung-pao chicken! Kung-pao chicken! Kung-pao chicken!

Okay, we're started....

Dear Jim:

When I grow up, I'm gonna be a comic book artist. I'm gonna draw tons of issues of *X-Men* and *Superman*. Then I'm gonna get pissed about my artistic license being infringed upon and go independent with my own book.

I'll do a kick-ass preview in *Wizard* and distribute variant covers of the preview at conventions. Then #1 can hit the streets. I'll put out the standard book, a variant cover, a Chromium cover and a Chromium variant cover.

Then I think I'll get "overworked," so #2 will never see print, but there's all these cool variants out there, sure to become collector's items. And the fans—who I'm doing all this for anyway—will get pissed and start calling for my head on a stick. But, hey—they're not mad at me. They're reacting to the "heartless machinations of the corporate comic industry," right?

Then there's toys. First, the primary characters will be produced in quantities so limited that you'd have to sell the urn your grandmother's ashes are in to get one. Then the secondary characters get released in "battle armor" and "space armor." And don't forget the repaints! And the super-limited, signed, gold repaint figure.

Then I'll take my original idea to Hollywood and put out a movie based on my comic. And when the film receives lukewarm reviews, I'll blame the director, who shied away from my original vision to practice *his* artistic license (That bastard!).

But my fans, who wanted to kill me two days ago, are flocking to the theater. Then they'll piss and moan about how the film wasn't true to the comic, and they'll feel bad that they wasted $7.50 on a ticket. (And $3.50 for the movie adaptation comic. And $3.95 for the variant cover.)

Then I'll make a triumphant return to comics with my work on the comics that made me famous to begin with, *X-Men* or *Superman*. Then, the fans who four days ago now wanted to kill me, rush to buy the issues of the corporate comic I'm working on.

But then my radical vision for the book will cause me to get ousted by Marvel or DC because they stifle my artistic license (The bastards!), and I'll have to get Jim Lee to cover for me. But I'll still

A ▶ HEY, FEELING GOOD IS FOLDING A TO B. ◀ B

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WOW, IT'S AMAZING HOW FAR WE WILL GO TO FIND A PEACHY KEEN FLAVOR. FOR EXAMPLE, SENDING A STRAWBERRY QUESTIONING ITS FATE BY ROCKET LAUNCHER FROM FRUITLESS TOIL ON EARTH TO A DISTANT UTOPIA.

WE JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE HAVING FUN AND HOPEFULLY WE MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD.

A ▶ ◀ B

BUNNY AWARD

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Jim takes his favorite letter and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jim,
How hot can the Human Torch get? How cold can Iceman be?

Ernesto I. Genuino III
Marigna@aol.com

According to Tom Brevoort, Marvel editor and walkin', talkin' history machine, "The Human Torch can achieve 'nova flame'—equivalent in temperature to the heat-pulse of an exploding nuclear warhead—for a few seconds. The exact degree of this temperature has not been accurately charted."

Iceman, on the other hand, can be so cold that he'd swoop right in on your girlfriend just after you've broken up with her. He'd also take your last 50 bucks, saying he needed it to make the rent, and spend it all on beer.

Man, that's cold.

Dear Jim,
What is Stan Lee's official title? Is he just a spokesman for Marvel?

James Rodgers
Waco, TX

Stan is about the loudest and best spokesman Marvel or any company could ever have. He's also chairman of Marvel Comics and chairman of Marvel Films, although he admits, "I'm still not quite sure what all that means. All I know is I love my job, and I'm always busy with something."

And now, just when you though it was safe: Q-and-A Dance Party A-Go-Go!

Hey Jimmy Boy,
1) What is Stan Lee's favorite cartoon?
2) What is your favorite cartoon?
3) Who would win a fight between Wolverine and the Savage Dragon?

Tony Porras
mp1tp2@aol.com

1) In a somewhat surprising move, Stan the Man actually jumps off the Marvel track and says, "Walt Disney's 'Fantasia.' I remember it impressed me more than anything else when I was young. It's brilliant. An absolute work of art."

2) Undoubtedly "The Simpsons." Nothing on TV makes me laugh harder. Well, maybe those "World's Strongest Man" competitions, but they're not cartoons.

3) Hey! Let's just ask Erik Larsen, Savage Dragon creator and soon-to-be writer of *Wolverine*. Take it away, Erik: "Dragon would kick Wolverine's ass in about two seconds. Wolverine's only got bone claws and the strength of one regular guy. Dragon has the strength of many, many regular guys. Now Wolverine with adamantium claws? That could be one heck of a fight."

And even though you didn't ask, Erik's favorite cartoon is also "The Simpsons." He says, "It makes me laugh." Simple enough.

have a hefty chunk of change with which I can retire from comics for good.

Then, I think I'll buy a hockey team....

G. Nathan Fancher
Johnson City, TN

You left out the superfluous inter-company crossover.

The scary part? That sounds like what passes for "Comic Marketing 101" these days.

On to better things....

Dear Magic Words,
Why aren't there any sound effects or thought balloons in *Watchmen*?

Jacob Goddard
GREDYGUTS@aol.com

According to *Watchmen* writer Alan Moore, it's a holdover from a previous project. "I did *V For Vendetta* with David Lloyd, who is very influenced by cinema. He said we could come up with a more compelling narrative if we left these things out and just let the dialogue and pictures tell the story. I liked the effect. I thought it made the drama stronger. It seemed appropriate to *Watchmen*, so I carried it over. In real life, you can't read thoughts or 'see' a sound effect. I think it makes a comic more cinematic, and brings it one step closer to real life."

Dear Jim,
1) Why does Spider-Man have such huge eyes?
2) How many toes does the Thing have?
3) Is the Thing's "thing" made of orange rock like the rest of his body?
4) Why isn't there a Silver Snowboarder?
5) Why is Willy Wonka such a dork?
6) Why did they give the Batman and Robin costumes nipples in "Batman Forever"?
7) What's your zodiac sign?

BUNNY PHOTO: PAUL SCHIRALDI

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Send your name, address, age, sex and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address at the end of this column (put your age on the envelope). The only way to get your Internet address listed instead is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look in the Wizard Bulletin Board, under Message Boards). **Pre-'98 entrants:** Please resend your entries.

8) Can I call you "Captain Winky"?

9) How did *Wizard* get its name?

10) Will you give me anything for free?

11) Who would win in a fight, you or Shaft?

12) Why can't I call you "Captain Winky"?

Jon Blit
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

1) All the better to see you with.

2) Four on each foot.

3) What "thing"?

4) Well, there could be. Maybe there should be. If Marvel were to take the Silver Surfer and make him the "Silver Snowboarder," it would be a serious and bold move that would speak to updating the character and bringing him more in line with modern times. But then the continuity freaks would go crazy and storm Castle Marvel, armed with torches and pitchforks. It's a Catch-22.

5) He was played by Gene Wilder in that movie. How could he not be a dork?

6) According to Jeff Walker, public relations guy for Warner Bros., "It was a Joel Schumacher design choice and there's really nothing more to it than that." That Schumacher—he does such wonderful things with textures!

7) The ram one.

8) Can I call you "the guy in a body cast"?

9) We did a title search and found that our first two choices—*Newsweek* and *The Saturday Evening Post*—were already taken. So we fell back on *Wizard*.

10) Sure—advice. Try this one for size: Don't spit in the wind.

11) Undoubtedly Shaft. Our favorite '70s blaxploitation action-movie hero is, after all, the cat who won't cop out when there's danger all about.

12) 'Cause that's about the only thing dorkier than Gene Wilder.

Dear Jimbo,

1) What's Comicraft?

2) Is there ever going to be a *South Park* comic?

3) How many terrestrial television channels do you have in America?

4) What the hell is "Cap'n Crunch"? Is it dog food?

Robert Abulafia
Bushey, Hertfordshire, England

1) Comicraft is a company that letters and designs more than 50 comics a month. It was founded by your fellow Englander, Richard Starkings.

2) Probably not. The TV show is about as hyper-popular

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NESTOR CORAZA
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VENTROS
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Caledonia, Ontario, Canada
N3W-2K2
Likes: Spider-Man, Lady Death

as it can get and Comedy Central hasn't done one yet. And they don't have any plans.

3) On my cable system, I get 71 terrestrial channels and three from Mars.

4) Nope. It's a mighty-tasty breakfast cereal that comes in a variety of varieties, my favorite of which is Crunch Berries.

Dear Wizard,

Could Kurt Busiek come visit my house? He could have unlimited peanut-butter sandwiches and tea. I also have a spare bed in my house he could sleep on. I figure if I'm going to invite anyone, it might as well be the best.

David Looney
Katlen5486@aol.com

Might as well. Kurt says, "It sounds awfully tempting—Mmmm, peanut butter!—but my editors have threatened my life if I commit to any more trips while I'm this far behind on deadlines."

That's confirmed by Tom Brevoort, one of Busiek's editors at Marvel. "I believe in the greatest good for the greatest number, so I can't approve such a trip. If Kurt visits one fan, he'll be deluged with requests to visit other fans, and his work will never get done. But you can still welcome Kurt into your homes a couple times a month, in the pages of *Avengers*, *Thunderbolts* and *Iron Man*."

Tom left out Homage Comics' *Astro City*, which is kinda cool, too.

Dear Magic Words,

Could you tell me what penciler Chris Bachalo (who is like a god to me) worked on before *Generation X* and *Uncanny X-Men*?

And what size paper do pencilers draw on?

D. Andrew Killingsworth
Auburn, AL

Chris Bachalo's best-known pre-X work is probably the mini-series *Death: The High Cost of Living*, or *Death: Time of Your Life*, another mini-series. He also did most *Shade, the Changing Man* issues between #1 and #50. And if yer really a Bachalo fanatic, you'll probably want to track down the pin-up he did in *Wonder Woman* #50.

Comic pencilers, Bachalo included, draw on original 11-by-17-inch boards. They get reduced by roughly one-third, to 6 3/4" by 10 1/4", when they become comics.

Dear Jim,

In my biology textbook, I read that once your blood-alcohol level reaches .65, you're dead. Is this true for Cassidy, the drunk vampire from *Preacher*? I imagine his level would soar off the scale. If vampires can get drunk, can't they get alcohol poisoning as well?

By the way, what's the highest *your* blood-alcohol level has ever been?

Seth Scolaro
Rando3k@aol.com

Cassidy getting dead drunk? *Preacher* writer Garth Ennis says, "I never gave that much thought. There is some stuff coming up in mid-1999 where we see what Cass can handle and what he can't. But I'm sure he can drink more than a mortal man. If he can handle a bullet in the head—and he has—he can handle his whiskey."

And my highest blood-alcohol content? That's between me and the Woodbury, Minn., Police Department.

Dear Jim,

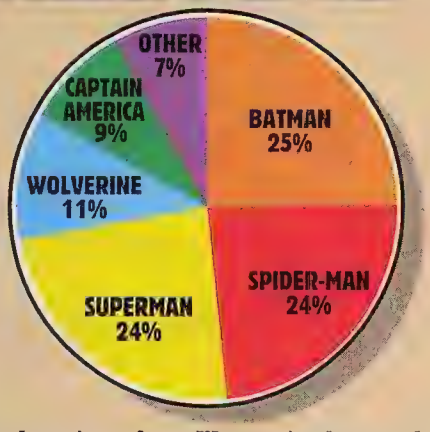
In *Danger Girl* #1, the word "*merde*" is mentioned twice. What does it mean?

Sean Mongeon
Mongeon@erols.com

SURVEY SAYS

ONLINE QUESTION OF THE MONTH

WHO IS THE GREATEST SUPERHERO OF ALL TIME?



Talk about irate fans. We received more than 500 angry (actually, wrathful) e-mails—including 11 threats of execution by firing squad and half a dozen other promises of death by various creative, but unprintable, ways—for our supposed stupidity. And all we did was pick Spider-Man as "The Greatest American Hero," a decision we stand firmly behind regardless of this furor (*Wizard* #83).

"It's Batman dammit!" wrote one fan. "Spider-Man may be the everyman, but who's the commercial success? Doesn't that mean people like him more?"

As the above results show, most of the debate centered on Batman vs. Superman vs. Spider-Man. Batman is the normal guy who could take anyone down despite incredible odds. Superman is the original, the most powerful and the superhero icon. And Spidey is the wisecrackin' underdog that everyone relates to.

But one reader lamented, "How could you forget Captain America?" Fans didn't, writing in Cap for a whopping 9 percent of the overall vote. ■ MATTHEW SENREICH

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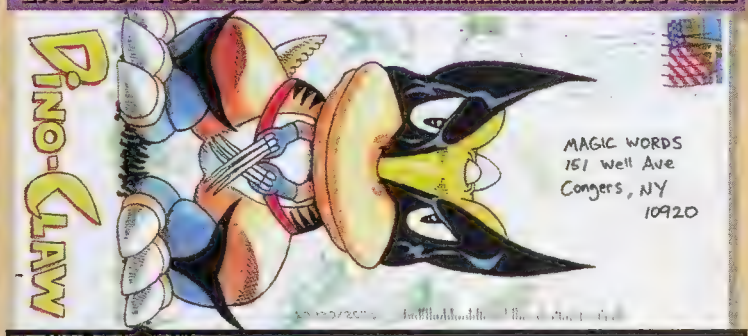
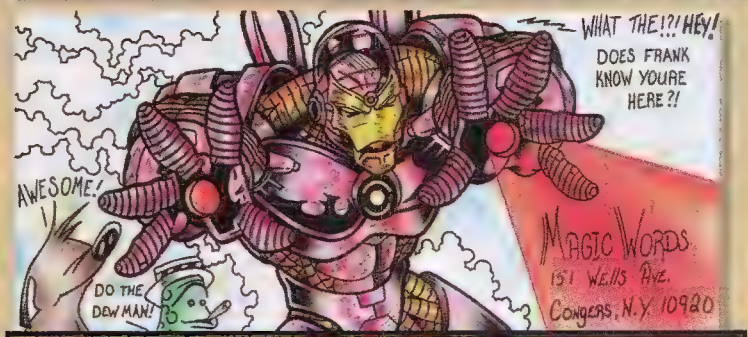
LETTER ART

Each fan who has letter art printed this month will receive a *C.H.I.X.* comic autographed by the entire *C.H.I.X.* creative team, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The talented creator of this month's best envelope also scores an original page of *C.H.I.X.* art. (Prizes provided by Studiosaurus, who wants you to know it's not in any way responsible for that whole "Godzilla" debacle.) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and a list of characters depicted on the back of your envelope. Good Luck!

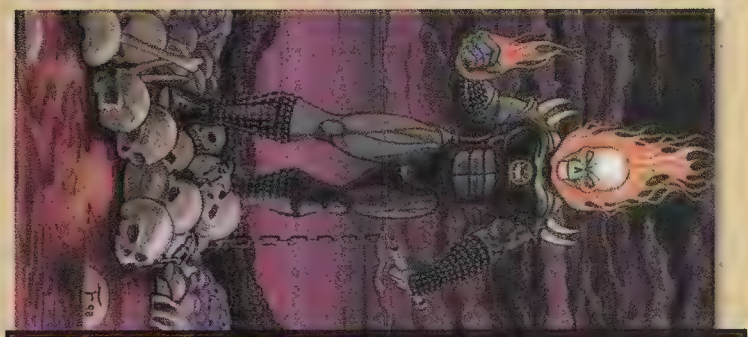
ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE



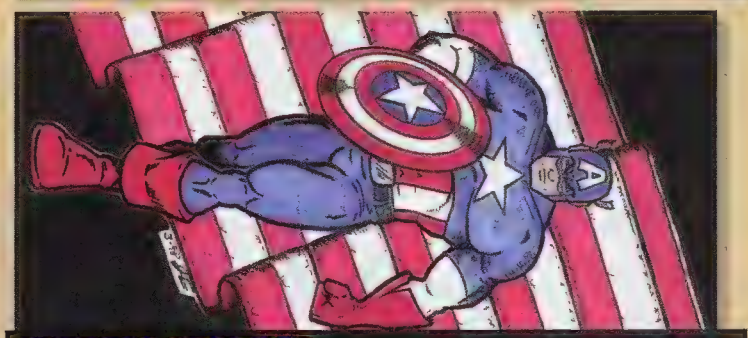
DINO-CLAW Chris Callen (and Dad) Lee's Summit, MO



IRON MAN/LIBERTY MEADOWS Derrick Holloman Jackson, NC



GHOST RIDER Todd Fielder DeGraff, OH



CAPTAIN AMERICA Jimmy Dubb Kingston Springs, TN

Uh...it means "poop." Danger Guy J. Scott Campbell, the creator of *Danger Girl*, says, "My wife is European and she speaks some French. I asked her what a French guy might say if he wanted to use...that word. And that's what she told me."

Dear Wizard Entertainment,

Every month I enjoy giving a portion of my income to a person, group and/or organization who has provided me with spiritual inspiration. Your Superman special publication has provided me with spiritual inspiration during April 1998. I thank you, Gareb Shamus Enterprises, with a gift of $17.10 ($24.95 Canadian). It's enclosed as a check.

Mark Tremills
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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APOCALYPSE NOW!

DC's apocalyptic 'Kingdom Event' threatens its universe in December

After years of false starts and creator conflicts, DC Comics' "Kingdom" is coming. The dark world seen in the acclaimed future-set mini-series *Kingdom Come* will be revisited in the "Kingdom Event," a seven-issue, three-week event shipping in December.

Granted, it's not the ongoing *Kingdom* sequel DC is planning (still a possibility, pending success of this project), and *KC* co-creator Alex Ross is *not* involved. But the violent "Elseworlds" possible DC future *is* being incorporated into present continuity—with the entire DC Universe hanging in the balance. And who's driving this bus to Hell? A man who knows the way: *KC* writer Mark Waid, who has been feverishly writing all seven books since July.

"We cleared big hurdles with DC early on," Waid said. "Huge stuff. Plot stuff. Character appearances. I had plans that I never thought we'd get away with. I found myself saying, 'Have I gone too far?' And they keep saying, 'You haven't gone far enough!'"

A bookend title (yet to be officially named) kicks off the first week of "Kingdom Event." It begins with Gog, a megalomaniac from the *Kingdom Come* future, who decides to use his massive powers to destroy Superman. Gog holds the Man of Steel responsible for the destruction of Kansas seen in *Kingdom Come* #1 and will travel through time to link the world of *KC* to the year 1999 in "real" DC continuity. Also in the first bookend, readers will be reintroduced to the post-*Kingdom Come* world, witness the birth of Superman and Wonder Woman's baby and watch Gog slay Superman again. And again. And again.

"The first bookend follows Gog marching back through time, on a mission to rid the world of Superman's 'evil,'" Waid said. "And he's decided to make some pit stops on the way, to exact his revenge as he builds his power. He's going back and killing Superman over and over, working his way back to 1999."

In the process, Gog apparently dooms the *KC* future world, and its heroes band together to deal with the havoc he has wreaked. At the same time, DC's current heroes have to team up to defeat Gog in the present time.

At the heart of the plot is the Linear Men, DC's time cops, who realize that what is happening *can't* be happening. "According to what they know, Superman is still alive in *DC One Million* [a September event that projects all DC titles into the 853rd century]," Waid explained. "How is that possible? Either one of those stories doesn't exist, or everything we know is wrong. I'd bet on the latter. That's the key to the entire series."

And then the second week of the event will be "Kingdom Week," featuring five one-shots starring characters seen in *Kingdom Come* dealing with the threat in their future:

Ibn Al Xu'ffasch

Kingdom Come's Xu'ffasch, Batman's son, will ally himself with the baddies of DCU to fight Gog's threat. Expect to see Lex Luthor, and a possible appearance by the apparently dismantled Brainiac. "Xu'ffasch will be trying to keep an eye on guys with brain power," Waid said.

Kid Flash

Kid Flash, daughter of present-day Flash Wally West, will try to reconcile with her brother. "Wally's son is the first slacker in the Flash family; the first to deny their responsibility of heritage," Waid said. "He's the first to go, 'Flash? I don't care.' Kid Flash has to try to set things right with her brother before time runs out."

Nightstar

Nightstar has to deal with the global panic as well as getting her father (Nightwing, a.k.a. Dick Grayson) and mother (Starfire) together after years of separation, Waid said.

'KINGDOM' COMING Among the stars of their own December one-shots during "Kingdom Week": Kid Flash and Planet Krypton (opposite), and Nightstar (above left) and Ibn Al Xu'ffasch (above right).

Offspring

The most lighthearted book of the bunch appropriately features the son of Plastic Man, a brand-new character never before seen. "Think the son of Jerry Lewis," Waid said. "This guy wants to be taken seriously, but at times, he's even goofier than his father."

Planet Krypton

The theme restaurant seen in *KC* takes center stage here. "*Planet Krypton* will be the odd man out," Waid said. "It's not character-centric, but many characters will walk through and it *does* carry a crucial element of the plot. It's the only linchpin to the final book."

The "Kingdom Event" will conclude during the third week with the final bookend—and a bang. "When it's over with, it will have the most lasting repercussions on DC you could imagine," Waid said. "It will change *everything* we know. The payoff is bigger than anything DC's published in 15 years."

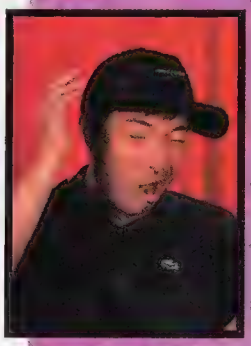
Conspicuously, Ross—a major factor in *Kingdom Come*'s success—isn't involved in "Kingdom Event." He bolted the "Kingdom" project about a year ago—mainly because of unhappiness with the way the project was being handled. "This is something being managed by DC and they went to Mark first," Ross said. "They did that because when you're a kid and you want something, you go to the parent who will more likely say 'yes.' They figured Mark was that. I got a call to be involved, but it was already in progress."

In the end, the ripples of "Kingdom Event" will be felt in the DCU for years, Waid said. And that's not a sleight-of-hand promise for fans—he and *JLA* writer Grant Morrison have already discussed future projects.

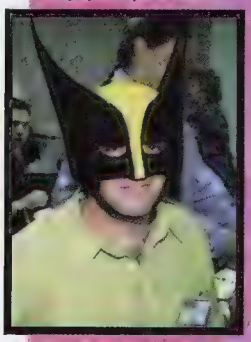
"Grant and I have plans to spin things out of this," Waid said. "Things far removed from *Kingdom Come* itself. I'm not talking about a new series with Nightstar. That's small potatoes compared to what's planned."

What the heck is he talking about? A new DC universe? Maybe, Waid said. "All I can say is it ain't *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, it ain't *Zero Hour*," he said, referring to past DC timeline-altering mini-series. "It's not trying to put another hard-and-fast structure of rules on the DC Universe—but it should have the same kind of repercussions. When it's over, there's no chance this will be forgotten." ■ **CHRIS HUTCHINS**

Thirty-seven-year-old "Klingon" kicked out of parent's basement. "My mom said I was an accident," Dave Bower of Grand Rapids, Mich. told reporters as he secured his Bat'Leth to the back of his bike.

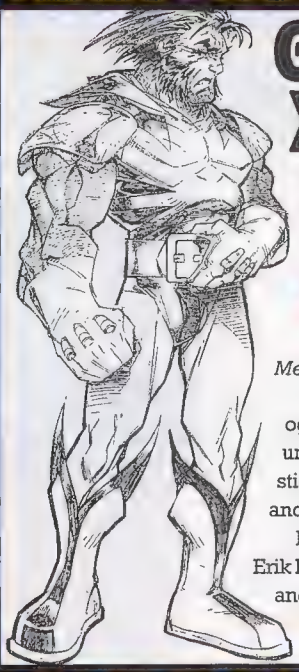


Superstar creator Jim Lee last seen shouting and banging his head. "I can feel it moving behind my eyes! Get it out! GET IT OUT!!" the Image founder was heard yelling moments before his head burst and thousands of baby spiders poured out.



Employee of the Month Wolverine receives promotion at local Target super-store. "Now I can repair human/mutant relations AND bring you the best buy for your dollar," the killing machine told reporters before battling the Juggernaut in aisle 12.

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHRADI.



GET READY FOR REDESIGNED X-MEN COSTUMES

Yu takes over 'X-Men' while Matsuda jumps on 'Wolverine'

The X-Men have a revamped character lineup. Now get ready for new faces in the art department.

Leinil Yu is leaving *Wolverine* and will be taking over as the new regular penciler on *X-Men* in mid-1999. Yu would like to bring something *else* new to the book.

"I'm redesigning costumes for some of the team," Yu said. "I want them to be instantly recognized as the X-Men. [X-Men Editor] Mark Powers and I agree that they should have a more uniform look, with the exception of Wolverine, Storm and Nightcrawler, who always seem to stick to unique costumes." Yu promises the new costumes, when unveiled, will be "sleek, sexy, and still carry the classic X-Men look."

Meanwhile, *Wolverine* is still in good hands as penciler Jeff Matsuda (*Kaboom*) and new writer Erik Larsen start with December's #133. Matsuda and Larsen's first six issues will hit stands biweekly, and Matsuda also plans changes. "I'll be making my style a bit darker for *Wolverine*," the artist said. "But I'm only one notch short of animated right now, so it's not like I'll be *really* dark."

Matsuda also promises consistency in Wolverine's stature. "I want to make him look short," Matsuda said. "Some artists draw him like he's some six-foot-two guy. But I think he looks cool as the short little psycho furball, and that's how I want to draw him." ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

X-ROOKIES Early pencil art by *X-Men*'s Yu (below) and *Wolverine*'s Matsuda (top left).

THEBUZZBIN

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE COMIC INDUSTRY

CAMPBELL

COVER BOY! Mega-popular *Danger Girl* writer/artist (and life-long Batman fan) J. Scott Campbell may jump on the Batman "No Man's Land" bandwagon as a cover artist. And Marvel spies tell us Campbell may soon do his first-ever Marvel work on future covers.

LARA RAIDS AGAIN? It's already done *Tomb Raider/Witchblade*. Now word is that Top Cow is trying to line up the rights to do a second Tomb Raider comic which may have a co-star, or may feature Lara Croft in solo action.

COMING OF KNIGHTS! Sketchbook material has been seen. Convention previews are out there. And the early returns we're hearing? The Marvel Knights books–*Black Panther*, *Daredevil*, *Inhumans* and *Punisher*–are going to kick monster ass.

McFARLANE ROCKS! Oh yes, he does. The latest rumor? Spawn creator and cartoon maven Todd McFarlane has been approached by Pearl Jam to direct an animated Pearl Jam video.

SUPES MAKES IT FANTASTIC FIVE! Negotiations are in their final phases and 1999 may very well see a Superman/Fantastic Four project. And it just might even be done in the super-sized "Treasury" format seen back in the 1970s!

WHO'S THAT GIRL? She's Devin Grayson and the *Catwoman* and *Titans* writer just might be lining up another DC series, this one rumored to be a creator-owned superteen title that takes place in DC Universe continuity.

GRANT SPINS AGAIN! This month, you're reading about a new *Hourman* ongoing. And word is, the ever-imaginative Grant Morrison just might spin *another* ongoing title out of *JLA* for 1999.

DRAGON CHASERS? Maybe. Well-placed spies at Wizard World Chicago '98 spotted Joe Madureira asking Erik Larsen if he could use Larsen's Savage Dragon in an upcoming issue of *Battle Chasers*. We'll see.

CAMPBELL PHOTO BY SARAH NEE.

we looked it up

WHO? WHERE? WHY?

AL XU'•FFASCH, IB•N (ib EN al Zoo FOSH); proper noun. 1996-present; **1** Literally translated from the Arabic, "son of the bat". **2** Batman's son in DC's *Kingdom Come* future and member of *KC*'s Mankind Liberation Front **3** What a scuba diver, when underwater, sounds like when he says, "I'll have tuna fish."

DARKNESS GOES TO GOTHAM

Darkness co-creator Marc Silvestri is giving himself a full year off from penciling comics. And when he returns, he's going to make sure it's on something that *matters*.

Silvestri and Top Cow Productions have come to agreement with DC Comics to co-produce two one-shots in February and March 1999 featuring each company's hottest characters. *The Darkness/Batman* will be produced by Top Cow, and *JLA/Witchblade* will be produced by DC.

Silvestri (*The Darkness*) will be joined by David Finch (*Ascension*) in penciling *The Darkness/Batman*. Now they're waiting for a writer. Top Cow Editor-in-Chief David Wohl has said the book will be written by either Alan Grant (*Batman: Shadow of the Bat*) or the team of Garth Ennis (*Preacher*) and Malachy Coney (*The Darkness*), but a final determination has not been made. There is no word yet from DC as to *JLA/Witchblade* creators.

"With this project," Silvestri said, "I'll be able to draw a character in Batman that I've always wanted to work on. There's great contrast between The Darkness and Batman. Although they are both dark characters, they come from different sides of the tracks. ■ SCOTT A. AUBREY

GAMBIT GETS DEALT A SOLO SERIES

Marvel Comics is tossing long-time X-Man Gambit, the card-chucking Cajun with a questionable past, into his own ongoing series this December. Steve Skroce (*Amazing Spider-Man*, *Youngblood*) will co-plot and pencil the book. No writer has been determined.

"We want to do something that evolves Gambit beyond a common jewel thief," Skroce said.

As such, the new series will play off recent X-Men events where Gambit was revealed to have been involved in the events of 1986's "Mutant Massacre" storyline.

"Guilt has turned him into a self-destructive person in his relationships," Skroce said. "Because of guilt and lack of belief in himself, he sets himself up to fail." Will he fail with on-again, off-again X-girlfriend Rogue? "Maybe that relationship can only go so far," he said. "We'll be looking at that." ■ MATTHEW SENREICH

NO JACKET REQUIRED The *Gambit* ongoing will look at how Gambit's past mistakes will affect his present decisions.

NEWS & NOTES

AMERICAN MULE ENTERTAINMENT

October's Halloween issue of *The True Adventures of Adam and Bryon* features psychotic serial killers, intoxicated sorority chicks and a hunch-backed superhero!

AVATAR PRESS

Heroes **Pandora** and Widow team up to investigate a series of kidnappings. It all goes down in the *Pandora/Widow: Arachnophobia* one-shot.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT

Superstars **Jim Starlin** (*Infinity* trilogy) and Stephen Platt (*Prophet*) bring on *Fighting American: Dogs of War* #2 in October.

BONGO COMICS

It's *The People of the United States vs. Homer J. Simpson and the Comic Book Guy* in a tale of censorship and citizenship, found only in *Simpsons Comics* #39.

CHAOS! COMICS

Lady Death and Purgatori duke it out in "Goddess War" in October's *Purgatori* #2 and *Lady Death* #10.

PURGATORI #2

CHECKER COMICS

October's *Mutator* #2 will showcase a fantastic **Simon Bisley** (*Lobo*) cover painting.

CLAYPOOL COMICS

Elvira takes on a would-be killer inspired by the movie **"Scream"** in *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark* #66.

DARK HORSE COMICS

Joe Kubert's epic graphic novel *Fax From Sarajevo*, called the best graphic novel of the year in 1996 by *The Washington Post*, will see print in paperback this October.

DAY ONE COMICS

Famed **Lucasfilm** artist Drew Struzan paints the cover of October's *Astounding Space Thrills* #3.

cont'd →

CREATORS FLOCK TO DESTROYED GOTHAM

Gotham City has been crushed by an earthquake and cut off from the United States. Who'd want to go there? Lots of talented writers and artists, naturally.

"No Man's Land," a story that's essentially "Batman Weekly" weaving through *Batman*, *Detective Comics* and *Batman: Shadow of the Bat*, officially kicks off with *Detective Comics* #729 in January. "NML" will run through the entire year with rotating creative crews lining up to take their swings at the Caped Crusader. But Jordan Gorfinkel, associate editor for the Batman books said Batman himself is nowhere to be found, at least at the beginning.

"Batman will have been absent from Gotham for about three months," Gorfinkel said. "As a result, villains have carved the city up into their own private kingdoms."

Creators cleaning up the mess include Bob Gale ("Back to the Future" movie screenwriter) and penciler Alex Maleev (*The Crow: Dead Time*), who do the first "NML" story, introducing an important new Bat-character. They'll hand off to the likes of Jon Bogdanove (*Superman: The Man of Steel*), Larry Hama (*Wolverine*) and even acclaimed mystery novelist Greg Rucka. And Alex Ross (*Kingdom Come*) is signing on to paint a cover or two.

But creators will *not* be able to play with one specific Bat-character. "We won't see the Riddler in 'No Man's Land,'" Gorfinkel revealed. "He's going to bail on Gotham, figuring it's safer to run around the rest of the DCU causing trouble." The Riddler will be popping up in *Impulse*, and possibly other non-Bat DCU titles.

The rotating creative approach is the best of all worlds for both the Bat-books, and the fans, according to Gorfinkel. "We're hoping that people will be open to having some radically different interpretations of Batman," Gorfinkel said. ■ **MATTHEW BRADY**

TWO X-PROJECTS DEBUT

The ripple effect from the new X-Men roster is starting to be felt. Marvel Comics will publish two new X-projects that look deeper into the developing relationships currently being explored in *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men*.

X-Men: Liberators, a four-issue mini-series debuting in September, showcases reunited X-members Wolverine, Nightcrawler and Colossus. The mini-series is written by Joseph Harris (*Slingers*), with pencils by Phil Jimenez (upcoming *Teen Titans vs. JLA*). *Liberators* finds Colossus heading back to Russia to honor the memory of his deceased parents. Wolverine and Nightcrawler come along for emotional support. But once in Russia, the trio stumbles across a military conspiracy involving mutants born in Siberia.

X-MEN: LIBERATORS

"We wanted an adventure involving just the boys in the X-Men," Harris said. "And through [Chris] Claremont/[John] Byrne-influenced flashbacks, we bring the long-term friendship of these characters into the present."

Meanwhile, December sees the 48-page *Team X 2000* one-shot, which picks up on events played out in July's *Uncanny* #358. Time-traveling mutant Bishop and Shi'ar princess Deathbird were left lost in space. As the pair tries to get back to Earth, a wormhole projects them into a future Earth overrun by the Shi'ar Empire.

"It's their worst nightmares," explained Marvel Editor Ruben Diaz. "Bishop's on a bleak Earth like his future Earth, and feels responsible for not being present to have stopped this from happening. And Deathbird is seeing everything she stood for turned ugly." Sean Ruffner (*Backlash*) will write *Team X 2000* with a penciler to be determined.

And will these books set the stage for future X-Men issues? "When these characters make it back, it's up to the X-writers," Diaz said. "We're planting seeds that could grow into something." ■ **MATTHEW SENREICH**

'MAGE' CLASSICS REPRINTED

After 10 years, *Mage* writer/artist Matt Wagner has found a way to reprint old and coveted issues of *Mage: The Hero Discovered*, the first Mage story published by Comico from 1984 to 1986. When Comico went bankrupt "[*Mage*] film was scattered to the four winds," according to Wagner.

Wagner's current *Mage: The Hero Defined* from Image Comics spiked interest in the old *Discovered*. New readers were shut out of previous tales of Kevin Matchstick, the modern-day representation of King Arthur. After discovering an old printer that had copies of the archived film, Wagner is now "remastering, recoloring and relettering everything." Eight monthly volumes of *Mage: The Hero Discovered* ship from Image, starting in October. Each book reprints two old issues with a new painted cover by Wagner.

WAGNER

PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADER

And Wagner is not neglecting his other creation, Grendel, the superhuman assassin. A *Grendel: Black, White and Red* four-issue mini-series debuts in November featuring what Wagner calls "short stories in those three colors by a batch of great artists." Those artists include Paul Chadwick (*Concrete*), Tim Sale (*Superman For All Seasons*), David Mack (*Kabuki*) and Jason Pearson (*Body Bags*). ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

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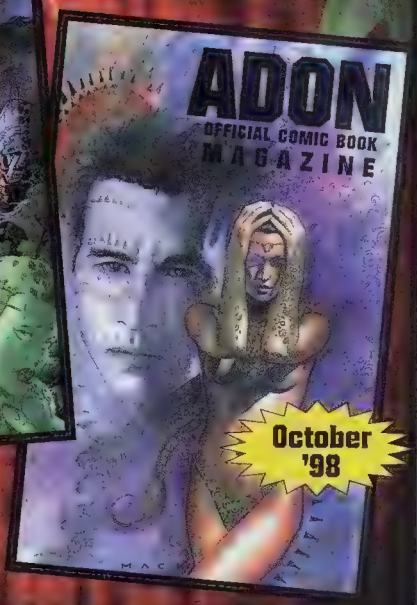

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contest winners

LUCKY STIFFS

• **Roy Kim** of Skokie, Ill., proved he's a better reject than the rest o' the bunch as he pulled down the Grand Prize in *Wizard* #82's "Join the Re:Gex" contest. Roy will appear in a future issue of Awesome Entertainment's *Re:Gex* and get a ton of Awesome swag.

• **John Escobales** of Clinton, Conn., was hangin' and bangin' in Chicago with the whole *Wizard* crew! He won an all-expenses paid trip to 1998's "Wizard World Chicago" convention in yet another wacky *Wizard* #82 contest!

'WIZARD' FAN AWARDS WINNERS

Comics' biggest awards ceremony went down on July 17 at the "Wizard World Chicago" convention as the fifth annual *Wizard* Fan Awards were doled out. Fans voted for their favorites from calendar year 1997. After more than 17,000 ballots were tallied, the winners were:

- Favorite writer **Kurt Busiek**
- Favorite penciler **Jim Lee**
- Favorite inker **Todd McFarlane**
- Favorite painter **Alex Ross**
- Favorite colorist **Liquid Graphics**
- Favorite letterer **Richard Starkings and Comicraft**
- Favorite editor **Bob Harras**
- Favorite hero **Batman**
- Favorite heroine **Witchblade**
- Favorite villain **Dr. Doom**
- Favorite supporting character **Commissioner Gordon**
- Favorite ongoing series ***Uncanny X-Men***
- Favorite one-shot or mini-series ***Batman: The Long Halloween***
- Favorite publisher **Marvel**
- Favorite comic merchandise **Dark Knight Returns 10th Anniversary Statue, DC Retail Products**
- Favorite comic TV or movie project "**The Batman/Superman Adventures**"
- Comics' Greatest Moment–1997 **Thunderbolts revealed as the Masters of Evil,** ***Thunderbolts*** **#1**

■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

NEWS & NOTES

DC COMICS

DC was smart enough to nail **Scott McDaniel** down to an exclusive contract. He'll be penciling *Nightwing* through #38 in September 1999 . . . October's **"One Million"** issues will be the last for DC's *Chase, The Creeper, Green Arrow* and *Young Heroes in Love*.

HEAD PRESS PUBLISHING

NO JUSTICE/ NO PIECE #3

October's anthology *No Justice/No Piece* #3 comes with a painted cover by Rob Prior and features the work of **Shannon Wheeler** (*Too Much Coffee Man*), Shon Bury and more! All proceeds from the book benefit the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

HYPERWERKS

The ongoing *Deity* #2 starts Jamie's intense training of her newfound powers in October.

IMAGE COMICS

• AVALON STUDIOS

Joe Casey (*Cable*) writes the brand-spankin' new ongoing *Hellcop* in October.

• HIGHBROW

In October's *Savage She-Dragon* #54, a green guy with a fin on his head shows up. But is it the real Dragon? Only **Erik Larsen** knows for sure.

• TOP COW COMICS

Congratulations to Randy Green, who takes over as the new *Witchblade* penciler with September's #26 . . . October's *Witchblade* #27 features a one-in-four variant cover by co-creator **Michael Turner**.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

This Halloween, get a taste of **Neil Gaiman** (*Sandman*) and artist Dave McKean's first collaboration when Kitchen Sink reprints *Violent Cases*, a 48-page story about a man who visits with gangster Al Capone's doctor . . . October's 190-page *The Life and Times of R. Crumb* features artists and writers like Roger Ebert, Matt Groening and **Alan Moore** sharing their thoughts and impressions of famed underground comic artist Robert Crumb.

LIAR COMICS

October's *More Than Mortal: Truths & Legends* #3 features a one-in-five variant cover by *The Darkness* artist **Joe Benitez**.

MARVEL COMICS

Penciler **Ed McGuinness** (*Deadpool*) signs on for a two-issue *Incredible Hulk* stint with September's #470 . . . **Tom Lyle** (*Spider-Man*) writes and pencils a new *Warlock* four-issue mini-series beginning in September . . . Writer J.M. DeMatteis is joined by **John Romita Sr.**

cont'd →

HOURMAN ARRIVES IN NICK OF TIME

DC's Man of the Hour is back, but with a few differences. Created by Grant Morrison as part of *JLA*'s "Rock of Ages" storyline, Hourman has been cooling his heels recently, something that's about to change thanks to Tom Peyer (*Legion of Super-Heroes*) and Rags Morales (*Turok*), the creative team behind DC's new ongoing *Hourman* series debuting in February.

Things start to move for the new android Hourman during September's "One Million" crossover, where it becomes clear to Hourman that he is the heir apparent to Metron of the New Gods. But during this 853rd-century story, Hourman becomes disillusioned with his role and ditches the future for a simpler time—ours.

In the present, Hourman looks for friends and ends up becoming buddies with former JLA mascot Snapper Carr and the eccentric denizens of a coffee house.

"Snapper's a self-employed, backyard mechanic who spends his nights writing his memoirs in this coffee house filled with weirdoes and freaks," Peyer said. "Snapper's one of the few people with the patience and breadth of experience to figure out Hourman, and our hero appreciates this."

But it's not all java and beatniks for Hourman. Peyer's got plenty planned for the time-tripping hero. "He'll be fighting Amazo, an early JLA villain," Peyer said. "He'll also intersect with the brief, tragic life of the android Tomorrow Woman, encounter the original Hourman, fight Epoch, the Lord of Time and languish in the Endlessly Repeating Day of No Hope, November 22, 1963. Yeah, it's safe to say his time will be full while he's here in our time." ■ **MATTHEW BRADY**

THUMBING

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

THUMBS UP

NEW X-TEAM: FINALLY! The X-Men is a team, rather than a mob of mutants. By chopping 15 members down to a workable seven–Wolverine, Storm, Rogue, Marrow and old favorites Colossus, Nightcrawler and Kitty Pryde–the X-writers can once again focus on what readers love best: the trials and tribulations of a small band of mutants sworn to protect a world that fears and hates them.

'SUPERMAN FOR ALL SEASONS': Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale, creators of 1997's smash hit *Batman: The Long Halloween*, have now weaved their magic on the Man on Steel. From his humble Smallville beginnings to big city reporter and heroic icon, Loeb and Sale have given us an in-depth look into Superman's personality, a side we haven't seen in years.

'ROBIN' ROMANCE: Years in the making, Robin is at last gettin' jiggy with Spoiler, the good-intentioned daughter of the supervillain Cluemaster. But the thing is, Robin can only date her in his superhero identity! (He doesn't want to compromise Batman's identity, y'know.) Can this romance work? We're stickin' around to find out!

THUMBS DOWN

'INTERIOR VARIANTS': What a crock. We have to buy the same book multiple times just to get *one* story? Top Cow's *Fathom* #1 and Marvel's *Slingers* #1 have different story pages in variant books, meaning fans must now spend more money than ever just to finish one issue's worth of story. Listen up, publishers: Not only are variant story pages a bad idea, but it's this type of short-term marketing gimmick that's put comics in the sales slump it's in.

MARVEL CARTOONS: This fall will feature zero, count 'em, *zero* new episodes of Marvel cartoons on TV. "X-Men," "Spider-Man" and "Incredible Hulk" can only be seen in reruns, "Silver Surfer" has been canceled and "Captain America" got tanked before it ever aired. The world's greatest superheroes deserve at least one good, new cartoon on the air. ("Avengers" would be a good place to start...)

MARVEL SPIN-OFFS: Didn't we learn anything from over-expansion of the Spider-Man and X-Men lines? Books such as *Rampaging Hulk* and *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty* serve only to water down the core character and force fans to buy more than one book. More does not mean better. Concentrate on one book and make it a great one.

'SLINGERS' SLINGS FOUR WAYS

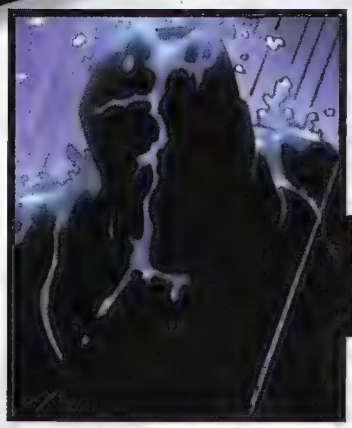
Marvel Comics hopes that more is better. So it's slinging four alternate *Slingers* #1s in October.

Slingers spun from Spider-Man's March "Identity Crisis" storyline, which birthed four new superhero personas. Now each character—Dusk, Hornet, Prodigy and Ricochet—will get 16 alternate interior pages of new art and story told from different perspectives in a *Slingers* #1 edition of his own.

"It sounds like a marketing decision, but we made the most of it," writer Joseph Harris said. "We're going to hopefully blow away people's preconceived notions that this'll be hokey."

The *Slingers* alternate interior pages follow hot on the heels of Top Cow Productions' alternate interiors in *Fathom* #1, July's top-selling comic. "But this is different than *Fathom*, which had three variant pages," Ruben Diaz, *Slingers* editor said. "We're giving large variant scenes."

Each *Slingers* #1 is 48 pages and carries a cover price of $2.99. Penciler ChrisCross will draw all four variants. ■ **MATTHEW SENREICH**



HIP 'SLINGERS' Former Spidey aliases Hornet (above) and Dusk (left) join Prodigy and Ricochet in October's *Slingers*.

ARTIST WILLIAMS PASSES AWAY

Mark Williams, artist on *Sisters of Mercy* and one of the founding fathers of No Mercy Comics, passed away on May 27 at age 38 after battling cancer. Williams also did horror movie special effects for a number of years. No Mercy Publisher Rikki Rocket said, "I have never met someone more in sync with the horror genre than Mark. He was a person not afraid to face his demons." ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

ANTHRAX

VOLUME 8 THE THREAT IS REAL!

GUITAR GIVEAWAY CONTEST

THE PIONEERS OF AGGRESSION HAVE LAUNCHED VOLUME 8... THE THREAT IS REAL, A NEW ALBUM OF THREATENING NEW TRACKS, FEATURING INSIDE OUT, CRUSH, CATHARSIS AND TOAST TO THE EXTRAS.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE NEW ALBUM, ANTHRAX WANTS TO GIVE ONE OF YOU A Jackson GUITAR — A $1200.00 VALUE.

TEN RUNNER UP WINNERS WILL RECEIVE FULL SETS OF *THE THREAT IS REAL* TOUR MERCHANDISE INCLUDING 2 T SHIRTS, SWEAT SHIRT, BASEBALL HAT, STICKER AND AUTOGRAPHED POSTER.

50 THIRD-PLACE WINNERS WILL RECEIVE AUTOGRAPHED ALBUM POSTERS.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO OR WILL IS FILL OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND TELL US WHAT TRACK # 9 ON *THE THREAT IS REAL* IS. SEND US YOUR RESPONSES BY OCT 31, 1998 TO BE ENTERED INTO THE DRAWING. THE DRAWING WILL BE HELD ON NOV 15, 1998. ALL WINNERS WILL BE NOTIFIED IN WRITING BY DEC 31, 1998.

Send entries to Ignition Records/Anthrax Contest
902 Broadway 13th Floor/ New York, N.Y. 10010

Name: Age: Sex:
Address:
City: State: Zip:
Phone/Email address:
Magazine you responded to:
What is the third track on The Threat Is Real album?

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. TO ENTER, ENTRY MUST BE POSTMARKED BY OCT 31, 1998. WINNERS WILL BE CHOSEN AT RANDOM ON NOV 15 1998 AND WILL BE NOTIFIED IN WRITING. ONE ENTRY PER HOUSEHOLD. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED BY LAW. OFFER GOOD FOR U.S. AND CANADA ONLY. EMPLOYEES OF PARTICIPATING PUBLICATIONS OR THEIR ASSOCIATED COMPANIES ARE NOT ELIGIBLE.

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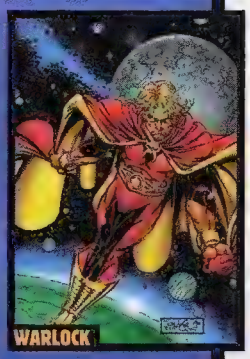
(*Amazing Spider-Man*) and Michael Zulli (*Sandman*) for the new *Webspinners: Tales of Spider-Man* #1 in November. *Webspinners* is a new ongoing series featuring untold tales from Spidey's past.


WARLOCK

ONI PRESS
Oni collects 1995's six-issue Malibu mini-series *Nocturnals: Black Planet* in October with new pin-ups by **Bruce Timm** ("The Batman Adventures" cartoon), Kieron Dwyer, Mike Allred and more!

PENNY-FARTHING PRESS
Comics legend **Jim Steranko** will contribute a variant painted cover to *Victorian* #1, which ships in November.

QUANTUM CAT ENTERTAINMENT
Frank Frazetta Fantasy Illustrated #4 in November features contributions from **Wendy Pini** (*Elfquest*) and painter Joe Jusko.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
October's *Poison Elves* #40 concludes the "Sanctuary" storyline. We'll see if Lusiphur ever gets his real body back. A **Drew Hayes** production.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
Action Girl Comics #16 in October features work from **Sarah Dyer** ("The Superman Adventures" cartoon) and a bevy of other female creators.

TALL TALE COMICS
Filmmaker Trout Beningo continues his quest for the good life in the '90s in ***Trout Fission*** #2, which hits stands in October.

TOPPS COMICS
Xena TV star **Lucy Lawless** is featured on a variant photo cover to October's *Xena: Warrior Princess: The Wrath of Hera* #2.

VIZ COMICS
Manga mania is in full effect as Viz launches its new Japanese comic anthology ***Animérica Extra*** in October. The 128-page magazine reprints four or five manga series each month.

WARP GRAPHICS
WaRP presents the ***Dreamtime*** graphic novel, a 176-page behemoth reprinting some of *Elfquest*'s greatest stories in a black-and-white, "telephone book-style" format. *Dreamtime* will be out in October.

Greetings from Wizar

BIG SHOT *Wizard* publisher Gareb Shamus welcomes you to the show!

LEAPIN' LIZARD Wizard Fan Award co-host Nelson does his version of "Godzilla: The Musical."

2 TO 1 Wizard staffers battled the #1-ranked foosball champ at our booth. (We lost. Badly.)

PHOTOS BY PAUL SHIRALDI

d World Chicago!

Wizard's second annual summer convention was a blast. Just take a look.

MEET YOUR MAKER Worlds shake when Stan Lee (left) meets his world-devouring creation, Galactus.

CHORUS LINE Convention goers dress up as the JSA.

BUNNY LOVE The Wizard bunny harasses Todd McFarlane.

SIGN OF THE TIMES Mike Turner (front left) and Marc Silvestri (back) had the biggest signing lines.

MMMM Marvel Knights folks Nanci Dakesian and Joe Quesada take a break between signings.

TAKE YER PICK Erik Larsen (left) and Scott Lobdell were but two of the many comic pros at the con.

A HARDCOVER TO REMEMBER

Peréz, Ross team up on 562-character, four-panel 'Crisis' cover

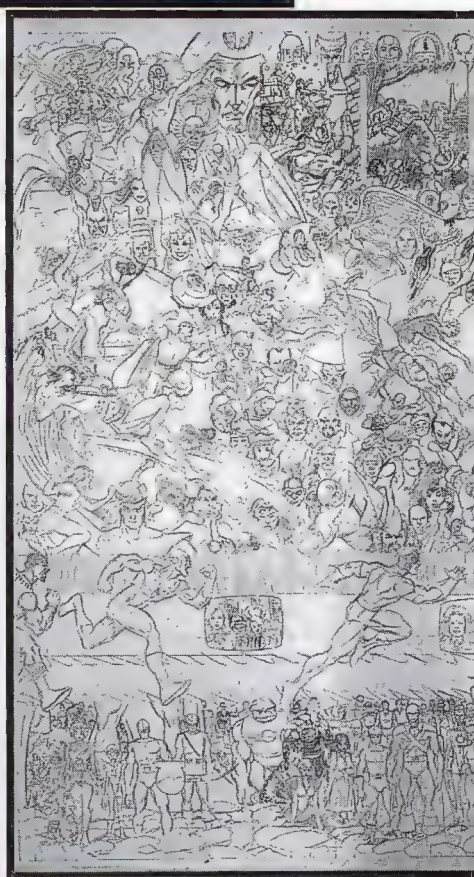
"Everybody thinks it's nuts," Alex Ross said. "And it is. But it's the ultimate fanboy dream."

Ross is living the dream, as he gets the honor of painting the cover to DC Comics' *Crisis on Infinite Earths* collected edition, penciled by original *Crisis* artist George Pérez. The hardcover is a 368-page whopper, collecting the epic, continuity-cleansing mini-series by writer Marv Wolfman and Pérez from 1985-1986. The collection will be recolored by Tom McCraw when it hits in late November with an as-yet-undetermined cover price. And, as a special bonus, a brand-new unseen chapter by Wolfman and penciler Paul Ryan will be added. But the nightmare part of Ross' dream? The cover's a four-panel monster with 562 characters. "I'm still trying to convince my wife *I'm* not the crazy one," Pérez said. "It was all someone else's idea."

That someone else? Alex Ross. "I love George Pérez's work and I loved *Crisis*!" Ross said. "We got together to see if a cover like this would be possible, and DC went for it. It will take me more than a month to paint, but it'll be worth it."

Ross' time investment actually beats Pérez's. "I had to go back and research characters because I'd forgotten some," said Pérez, who penciled the original *Crisis*. "It took me three weeks. It was incredible, tiring work."

Pérez's finished pencil artwork measures a whopping 5 feet by 2 feet. But art fans need not worry: The actual printed cover will have an acetate overlay printed with the logos so as to not obscure any of the art, and a retail poster is planned for sometime in 1999. ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN



POST-'CRISIS' Three weeks and 562 characters later, Pérez's 5-feet-by-2-feet penciled art board for the *Crisis* cover is ready to be painted by Ross.

MARVEL KNIGHTS PLANS SECOND WAVE

'Dr. Strange' mini-series; Mack steps in as 'Daredevil' writer

Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, the editors at "Marvel Knights," aren't done by a longshot. As their new line at Marvel Comics—currently including *Daredevil, Black Panther, Inhumans* and *Punisher*—is launching, Wave Two is already in the works.

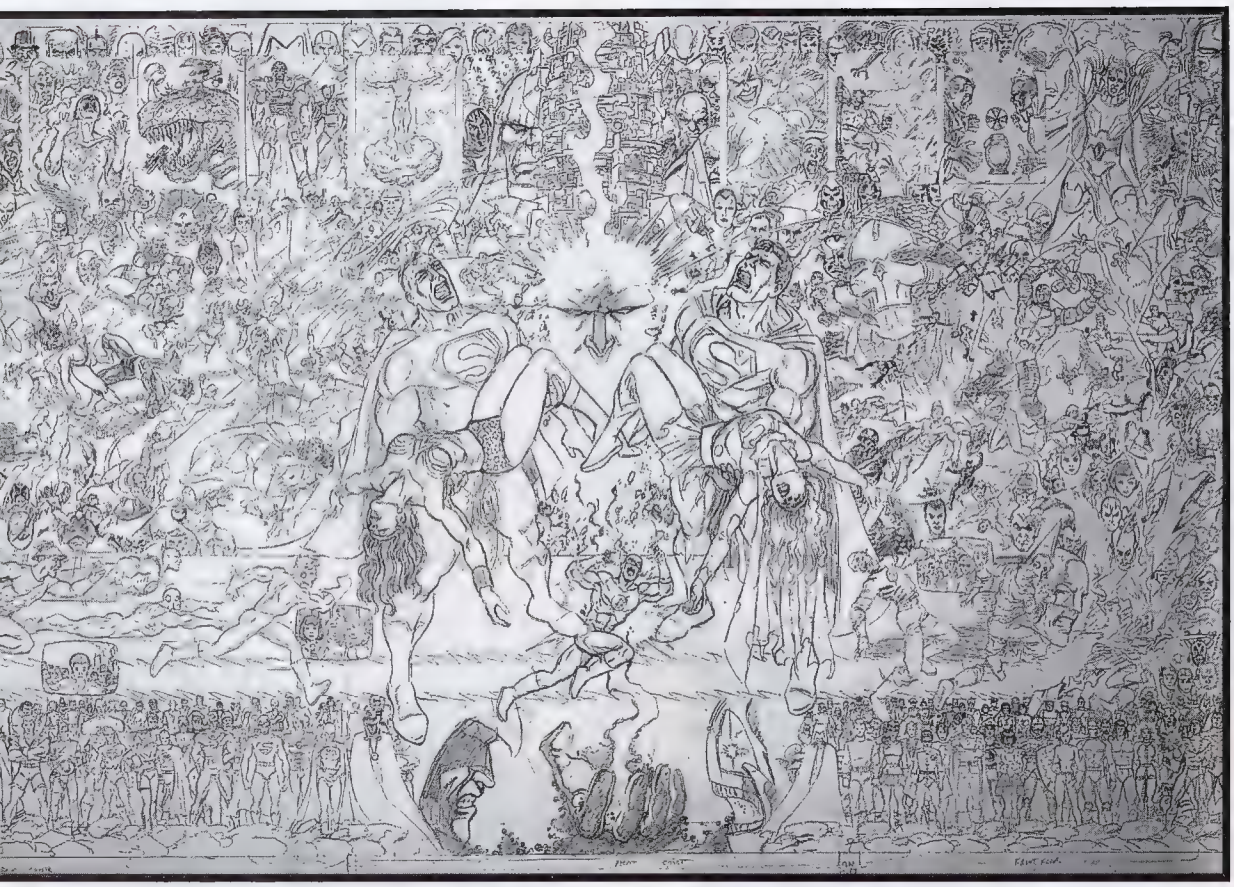
First up is the four-issue *Doctor Strange* mini-series slated for December. Guided by co-writers Tony Harris (*Starman*) and Dan Jolley (*The Mummy*), readers will see a cult spread through New York and a very human Strange examining his vulnerabilities.

"Strange was once in an accident, and the nerves in his hands were damaged," Harris, who's also penciling the series, explained. "In our story, we're looking at a man who has all these abilities...but can't even control his hands."

Writer David Mack (*Kabuki*) joins Quesada and Palmiotti on *Daredevil* in April's #7. Kingpin is set to be the major player. "I'll be touching on what motivates Kingpin by going back to his childhood," Mack said. "Kingpin's forgotten that the strength of a leader is to lead from the front. That teaches him to approach things differently."

And Devin Grayson (*Titans*) is tight-lipped about the three-issue *Black Widow* mini-series she's writing next spring. But she will say this: "The Widow is going to have a relationship with [Daredevil] Matt Murdock, and she'll be involved in a 'James Bond'-level spy thriller. Oh, and we'll be introducing a *new* Black Widow, too." ■ CHRIS HUTCHINS

'STRANGE' DAYS Harris brings his talents to Marvel's master of the mystic arts.



DANGER RANGER
(THE OTHER "DANGER" TITLE)
"AWESOME
ACTION
COOL
GRAPHICS
DIAMOND PREVIEWS
review
ISSUE
NEAL
ADAMS
cover
on the web
back issues available in September at:
www.checkercomics.com

BENITEZ
WEEMS
NELSON

LAST MAN STANDING

comic battles you want to see again

WITCHBLADE VS. DARKNESS

THE COMBATANTS

TALE OF THE TAPE

5'9"	HEIGHT	6'2"
125 lbs	WEIGHT	185 lbs
69"	REACH	74"
Manhattan, NY	HOMETOWN	Manhattan, NY
Showing	EPIDERMIS	Not showing
Law enforcement	OCCUPATION	Law breaking

A New York City cop on the trail of her father's killer, Sara Pezzini ran afoul of the mob and was gunned down. Instead of dying, Pezzini merged with the Witchblade, a sentient mystical gauntlet which can shoot magical force bolts, shape-shift into armor, unleash choking tendrils, heal its wielder—heck, new Witchblade powers are discovered virtually every day.

Mafia hitman Jackie Estacado led a "normal" life of fast cars, faster women and clean hits before inheriting the "Darkness," a mystical force passed through his bloodline. Possessing the power to create anything his mind fully understands—and able to summon Darkling Imps—Estacado now finds himself thrust into the middle of the ancient battle of good vs. evil.

tha winnah... Attacking the Witchblade head-on with an almost reckless fury, the Darkness pounds on Pezzini with everything he's got to keep her distracted from his true attack: a horde of Darkling Imps coming from behind. Pressing his attack, the Darkness gains the advantage as the battered and bleeding Pezzini disappears beneath a mound of bloodthirsty Imps. However, Witchblade's police training helps her regain her focus. Sweeping aside the Imps and attacking a surprised Estacado, Witchblade batters the Darkness to...defeat. As Witchy explains why this fight would only end in death, Estacado plays along and marshals his strength for one last surprise attack. Expecting as much, Pezzini fends off the attack and does what every good cop must from time to time: put the perp down.

this month's battle drawn by JOE BENITEZ and JOE WEEMS

FIRST LOOK

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Byrne and Garney will kick off a new era for the Hulk—but don't look for familiar foes

It looks like *The Incredible Hulk* is going through as many personality changes as the green-gened giant has. Peter David, *Hulk* writer of 12 years, is out. Newcomer Joe Casey is in...temporarily. Revamp-overlord John Byrne and penciler Ron Garney (*Captain America*) will take over as the creative team with next February's #475.

Byrne remains mute about specific plots and character appearances, but he does have plans to give the title a nomadic angle. Hulk will be traveling, encountering new faces and problems. Byrne has said readers won't see much of *Hulk's* supporting cast, and guest-stars are set to visit.

Garney offers some hints of his own.

"Honestly, we haven't gotten into plots that far, but I know I will create new characters," he says. "We don't want to start off doing Abomination stories. We want the Hulk to run into characters—not so much people chasing him—and get him into new adventures. From that, the destruction ensues."

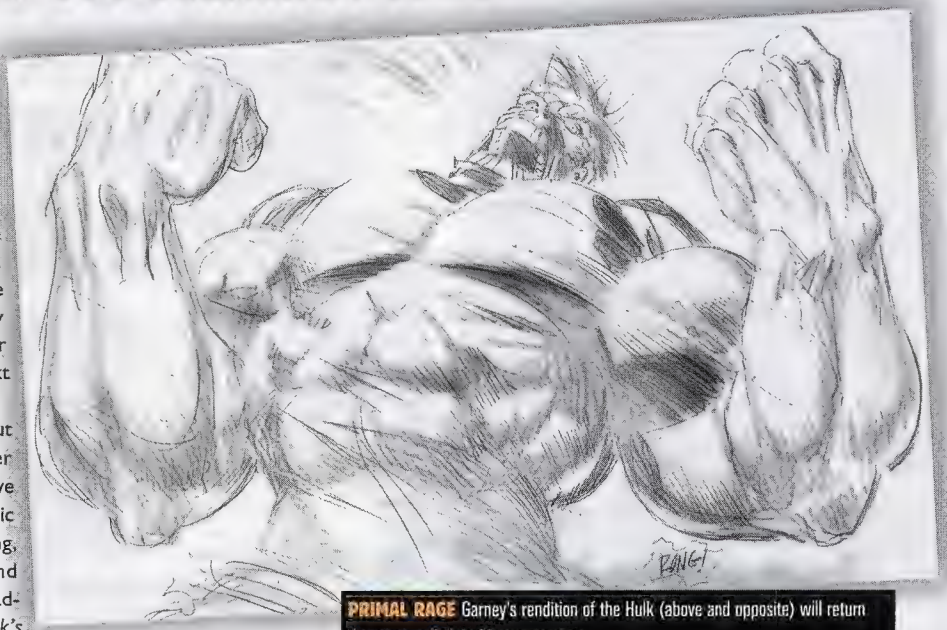
And so does a new era for *Hulk*. Byrne will take the Hulk back to his primal-rage roots, something Garney's excited to explore.

"Once I got to draw him in *Silver Surfer* #125, I realized how much fun it was," he says. "You don't need to use restraint with Hulk—artistically, you push it. Everything should be big and almost ostentatious about his form. He's *huge*."

Readers shouldn't freak about the upcoming themes, Garney said. And they shouldn't think the team is forgetting the last 12 years of *Hulk*, either.

"It's going to be a different animal," Garney admits, "but anyone worried is worried out of nostalgic sense. I'm not thinking about following up Peter David's run. I don't think John is. Is Byrne going to change everything? Of course not. People think he might do that, but he's not."

Does Garney have any favorite villains he'd like to draw on the run? "Not really; I just want to draw the Hulk and whatever characters we come up with will be fine," he says. "I wouldn't mind the regular Hulk villains like the Leader, as goofy as they are. Even the Abomination at some point. Hopefully, we'll come up with new stuff."



PRIMAL RAGE Garney's rendition of the Hulk (above and opposite) will return the green goliath to his savage roots.

Kentucky-based writer Chris Hutchins and staff writer Matthew Senreich, goofy as they are, hope to be drawn in sometime soon.

BY CHRIS HUTCHINS AND MATTHEW SENREICH

VITAL STATS

WHO?
Writer John Byrne and penciler Ron Garney take over *The Incredible Hulk* with issue #475.

WHAT?
After Peter David's 12-year run as writer, the green goliath gains a new creative team and direction next February.

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Expect a "traveling hero" mood to the book...with guest appearances galore.

RONG!
PALMIOTTI '98
ATIYEH

HELP!
THE GUIDE
WIZARD
TO COMICS

PORARY INSANITY

A 'Wizard' intern describes his first work day in hell

By Chris Hutchins as told to the *Wizard* Staff

YOU won't believe any of it. But it's all true. In the summer of 1998, for a few short months, I—Chris Hutchins—worked in the asylum know as Wizard Entertainment, home of *Wizard* magazine. As a fanboy of the highest order and loving everything to do with comics, what better place than *Wizard*, the hot spot of the comics industry? Here I'll be the first to learn all the breaking news, meet the top celebs, get free comics and...GET PAID TO DO IT! Whoo-hoo!

I still remember that first star-struck day as if it were, well, just a couple of weeks ago...

THERE'S NEVER A BAD TIME... When I meet Jim, I also meet his many vices.

8 A.M. Breakfast at Chez Orlando

The alarm goes off and I wake up in the house I share with fellow *Wizard* staffers Greg Orlando (one of them copy editor types) and André D. Shell (one of the thugs in the research department). André is pretty laid back and easygoing; Greg pretty much keeps to himself and is the kind of guy who would smother you in your sleep with a pillow if you drink straight out of the milk carton. I make it a point not to drink straight out of the milk carton.

8:30 A.M. The Point of No Return

I stand before the glass doors of Wizard Entertainment and marvel at the strangeness of it all. The stand-alone building is at the back of a heavily wooded industrial park where herds of deer greet you as you park and the aroma of freshly baked bread from the bakery opposite Wizard envelopes you as soon as you step from your car. I figure the Smurfs live around here, too.

8:40 A.M. I Meet...Jim

Turns out I'll be sharing an office with senior staff writer (and that "Magic Words" letter column guy) Jim McLauchlin. Aside from having an entertainingly bizarre story on every subject (most of which include him waking up naked somewhere), he also has what he calls his "Collection of Bizarre Food Products" (see sidebar). They line his windowsill and he shows me where one cracked open and left a corrosive stain.

My attempt to switch offices fails.

DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL Is DC Comics executive editor Mike Carlin (right) my long, lost dad?

9:10 A.M. Mike Carlin's Love Child

I'm given a walking tour of the fanboy-packed Wizard offices, sidestepping toys, stacks of comics and pets (yeah...I said "pets"), when managing editor Andrew Kardon laughs, points a finger at me and tells me I look just like DC Comics executive editor Mike Carlin. I smile politely and make a mental note to key his car during lunch.

10 A.M. I Hate Intercoms

Whoever made it that every phone could access the intercom should be forced to retake their SAT. God help the soul who goes on there to make an announcement and screws up a word or somehow messes up. What follows is a solid 15 minutes of what could only be called an intercom duel as dozens of staffers take turns paging the building with sound clips and impressions of the person who screwed up. I decide to stick with voice mail.

10:40 A.M. Wizard's Ark

Aside from the wandering herds of deer and the pets that overturn office trash cans, it turns out there's a well-endowed basset hound nicknamed "Big D--k Dog" (you figure it out) that stalks the parking lot during lunch urinating on cars. Oh, and I can't forget that groundhog named Eric who—if you can snag a printable photo of the little tyke—could earn you $200. The dog whizzes on the car next to mine and I never catch a glimpse of the groundhog.

11:30 A.M. Free Stuff

It turns out almost every company sends crates of free stuff to *Wizard* for review purposes, which in turn is doled out to the staff to see how fans react to it. Comics, videos, toys, statues, video games...it's like Kwanzaa every day here. Thinking there's gotta be some strings attached, I pass on the loot. It's probably stuff *Wizard* launders for the Yakuza anyway.

11:50 A.M. Wizard: The Foosball Magazine

I make my way to the lobby, where I find a pinball machine, a ping-pong table and—surrounded by more than a dozen staffers—a foosball table. It's apparently the final game in a two-month foosball tourney and a four-foot trophy is being awarded to the new champs: *InQuest* editor Mike Searle (who also won last year) and accounting clerk Mike Fasolo. I make a joke about how we actually get paid for this and somebody asks, "Who invited Mike Carlin?" Whatever.

12:15 P.M. The Company Card

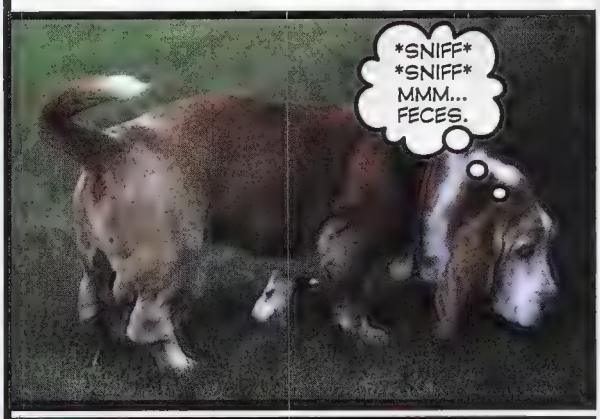
Turns out the majority of planning sessions take place over extended lunches where *Wizard* picks up the tab. Not a bad deal considering what they're paying me only allows for one meal a day. Nine people head out for a two-hour lunch to plan *Wizard* #89, the annual "Year-Ender" oversized issue that's one of the more important magazines the company produces. I don't know what typo got my name on the list, but I keep a low-profile and two-fist the potato skins.

2:30 P.M. The Pee-Pee Dance

Sixty-five employees, four small bathrooms. After a chair-squirming few minutes, I learn there's a fifth "mystery" bathroom in the warehouse. I head back into the airplane hangar-sized storeroom and run into Donato. Who's Donato? He's the warehouse manager who's built like a cigarette machine with legs and is usually seen carrying a compound bow, a hunting knife or a big stick. And I run into him in the bathroom. I smile, make like I just wanted to wash my hands and decide to wait out one of the other johns.

3 P.M. Mace Hurts

No matter where you are, knowing what kind of armor Boba Fett wears is not a way to pick up chicks. Even the ones who work at fanboy-like companies like Wizard. Maybe next time I won't wear my Green Lantern T-shirt. (And it's Mandolorian armor, by the way.)



IT'S BIG I'm keeping my fingers crossed BDD (above) doesn't pee on *my* car.

3:20 P.M. The Big Cheese

Wizard publisher Gareb Shamus pops into the office to "see the guy who looks like Mike Carlin." I speak to the founder of *Wizard* for a few minutes, telling him what a big fan I am of the magazine and all, when his pants start ringing. I stand there uncomfortably for a minute hoping he doesn't expect me to answer, when he pulls a cellular phone out of his pocket, waves goodbye to me and wanders off down the hall. I admit to my office mate Jim that I was kinda nervous meeting him, but Jim tells me that wasn't the real Gareb, but actually a bunch of trained ducks in an amazingly lifelike Gareb suit. Based on my day so far, I half believe him.

3:55 p.m. The Devourer of Worlds

Out of the corner of my eye I catch movement and turn just in time to spot a 7-foot Galactus and a 5-foot bunny walking past my door. I sit there for a few minutes weighing the pros and cons

RICO SUAVE As you can tell, I'm a hit with Wizard ladies (from top) Cassie Lopusnak, Arlene So and Karen Evora.

of poking my head out the door to double-check what I saw. The way I figure it, two things could happen: A) I'll look down the hall and nothing will be there. That would mean this place has weirded me out more than I thought. Or B) There would be a 7-foot tall Galactus and a 5-foot bunny roaming the halls. I'd have to go home then.

4:18 P.M. The Groundhog Lives!

I'm looking out the window for a few minutes to give my eyes a rest from the computer screen when the fabled Eric the Groundhog runs past my window and disappears a few moments later into some bushes. Seconds later, *Wizard* price guide editor Bob Marshall—clad all in black and mouthing curses—rounds the corner with camera in hand. He spends the next 10 minutes poking around the underbrush before mouthing more curses and heading back inside. Odds are that groundhog will take a picture of *Wizard* before *Wizard* takes a picture of it.

4:37 P.M. The Twinkie

Finishing my drink at the water cooler, I spot an unopened Twinkie thumbtacked to the ceiling. Upon closer inspection I see the date "4/15/96" scribbled beneath it. I ask passing editor Brian Cunningham what that's all about and he instead points out that I "look just like Mike Carlin." I smile pleasantly and wonder if there are any internships open at *Comics Buyer's Guide*.

5:01 P.M. Mat Mania

The office of editor-in-chief Pat McCallum has transformed from the "Shhhh...he's really busy" workspace into Madison Square Garden. Almost two dozen staffers have crowded in the office (some having swapped their old shirts for "New World Order" Tees) and are in the middle of "Wizard League Night," the weekly Monday get-together where they play some Nintendo 64 wrestling game. Aside from the actual wrestling belts, they apparently have other stakes on the line as well. I watch part of a "Loser must wear a Spice Girls T-shirt all day tomorrow" match before realizing I'm slowly being drawn into this insanity. I'd better get while the gettin's good.

5:35 P.M. Home

It's been a long nine hours and the best thing I've seen today is the pizza my two roommates André and Greg have ordered. I kick off my shoes, plop my butt in a chair and grab a slice to start forgetting the day. Just as the last images of prehistoric Twinkies, elusive groundhogs and 5-foot bunnies are pushed from my head, Greg chimes in with "Anybody ever tell you you look just like Mike Carlin?"

I'm going to bed.

Wizard intern Chris Hutchins now cries himself to sleep every night and wants "the bad men to go away." Anybody else up for an internship?

SNACKS FROM HELL

And now, for your viewing pleasure, the top 10 most unsettling items in *Wizard* senior staff writer Jim McLauchlin's "Collection of Bizarre Food Products." Bring a bucket.

10. Anis Candy
This one was brought back from a trip to France, coincidentally enough the birthplace of the term "candy ass."

9. Hickory Smoked Ostrich Snack
"Ostrich Snack" meaning it's made of ostrich, not something you feed an ostrich.

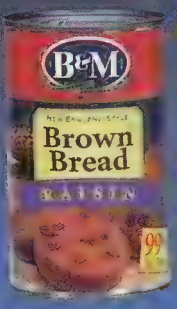
8. Orbitz Natural Fruit-Flavored beverage
It's got chunks floating in it. Chunks. In your soda.

7. Uncle Billy's Voo Doo Jerk Slather
NEVER eat anything made by an "Uncle Billy." Especially not a "slather."

6. Snow's All Natural Clam Juice
There's nothing "natural" about clam juice.

5. Bubba Brand Screamin' Crab Boil
It's "environmentally safe" and makes crabs scream. Mmmmmm!

4. Tomato Aspic Jellied Tomato Salad
Canned vomit.



3. Ass in the Tub Hot Sauce
The after-effects implied by the name guarantee this one stays unopened FOREVER.

2. Can of Bread
Canned bread...?

1. Armour Potted Meat Food Product
Ingredients (no joke): Mechanically separated chicken, beef tripe, partially defatted cooked pork fatty tissue, beef hearts, partially defatted cooked beef fatty tissue... uhhh, we think we're done. ■ The *Wizard* Staff

STRIP TEASE

STARRING Akiko

WHO: Spunky li'l fifth-grade Akiko and her buddies from the planet Smoo.

WHAT: "It's 'The Wizard of Oz' meets 'Star Wars,' I guess," says *Akiko* writer/artist Mark Crilley. "Akiko's just a regular Earth girl who goes to the wondrous planet Smoo for wild and dangerous—but always hilarious—adventures."

The fun started when Akiko was summoned by King Froptoppit to Smoo—a planet where foul-smelling bropka lizards and acid-spewing sleesup worms are found. It seems the king's son, Prince Froptoppit, was lost. And Akiko had to find him.

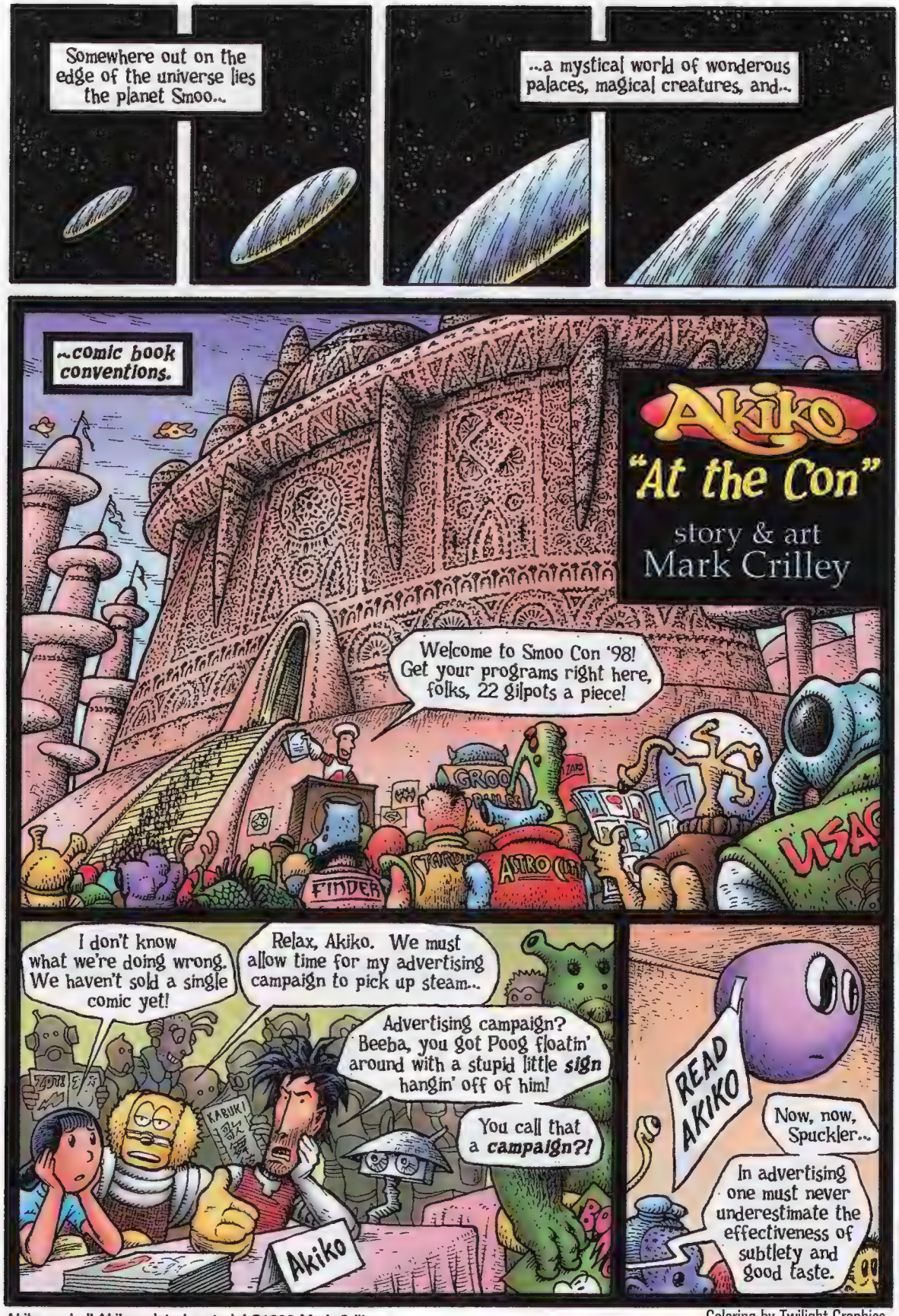
Akiko was introduced to a group of the king's men who would help her: Spuckler, described by Crilley as "a wild, reckless space cowboy who always dives in without thinking"; Beeba, "the cautious, bookish academic who's always trying to hold Spuckler back"; Gax, "Spuckler's rusty, trusty robot companion"; and Poog, "the all-knowing, alien, floating sage." After adventuring all over Smoo—and after Akiko single-handedly defeated Gamgor, the Living Castle—the king's true purpose was revealed: The whole adventure was a test to see if Akiko was worthy of marrying the prince! Seeing as how she was only in the fourth grade at the time, Akiko declined the proposal and returned to Earth.

But Akiko was later brought back when a *real* crisis arose: The Prince was kidnapped! Akiko was reunited with the crew, and since she's the most level-headed of the bunch, became their leader. After a massive 18-issue adventure, the prince was rescued. Since then, Akiko has returned to Smoo many times to see her pals—and the prince, 'cause there's just a hint of romance brewing there.

WHERE: Akiko and gang appear monthly in *Akiko* from Sirius Entertainment. Just jumping on? Issues #1-#7 are collected in the *Akiko Volume One* trade paperback and #8-#13 are found in *Akiko Volume Two*.

WHAT'S NEXT: Akiko's currently wrapped up in a six-part story in which the crew has to get a panacea potion from a nasty giant named Bornstone. But the real drama, according to Crilley, comes from a new character. "Prince Froptoppit is getting more serious about Akiko," he says. "But a character named Kel comes along who's more handsome and more dashing than the prince. This makes the prince insanely jealous. And Akiko is torn between the two."

Down the line, Crilley plans what he describes as, "the thing *Akiko* fans have been demanding—an Earth-bound story with the whole crew. I've just got to find a way to do it on Earth and keep the sense of wonder. With the cast I've got to work with, it shouldn't be too hard."



Akiko and all Akiko-related material ©1998 Mark Crilley

Coloring by Twilight Graphics.

How much for the robot?
The robot? Naw, buddy, the robot b'longs to me.
HE'S LEASING ME, ACTUALLY...
SIRIUS
I'll give you 50 gilpots.
Listen guy, he ain't for sale. Now scram.
I'll give you 100 gilpots.
What are you, deaf?
200 gilpots.
200, eh?
Spuckler!
Sorry, 'Kiko.
Here, guy, have a comic.
Spuckler, you idiot...
...we're never going to make any money if you keep giving the comics away!
Well, we ain't exactly gettin' rich just sittin' on 'em, are we?
Might as well lighten the load, I figure...
That's easy for you to say. I'm the one who had to pay the printer!
I like makin' people happy. You got a problem with that?

Why don't you just buy everyone lunch?! I'm sure that would make them enormously happy!
Why don't I just pop you a good one in the schnoz?
I'd prob'ly get a standing ovation!
Go on, Spuckler!
You think you're so tough...
PAF!
What a punch!
Yeah! You really clocked him one!
Do it again!
I'll give you 50 gilpots!
Later...
BUY A COMIC SEE A PUNCH!
I should never have agreed to this ridiculous scheme...
Hang in there, Beebs. Sales are goin' through the roof!
I just sold another three trade paperbacks, Spuckler. That's seven punches a piece.
Comin' right up!
I have got to find a new circle of friends...
the end

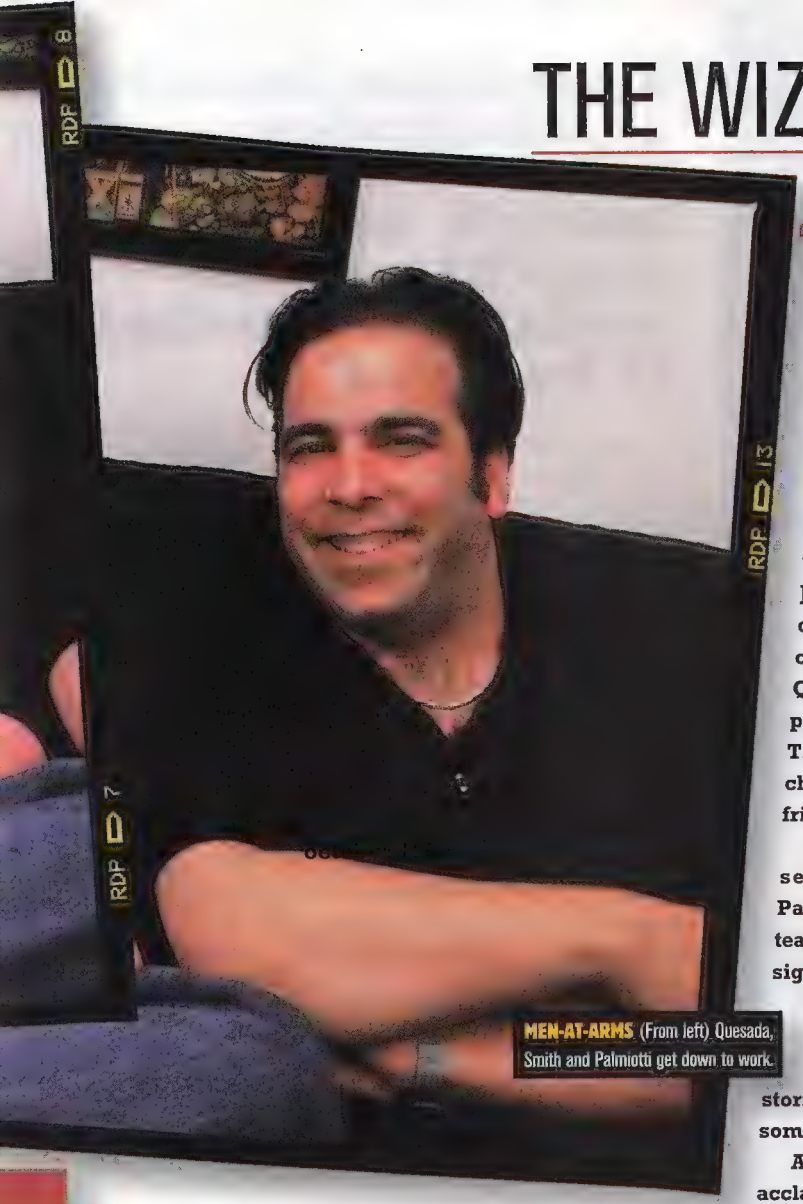
MARVE

kni

Film director **KEVIN SMITH** joins forces with comic artists **JOE QUESADA** and **JIMMY PALMIOTTI** to give 'Daredevil' a grittier feel, kicking off the four-comic Marvel Knights project

THE WIZARD Q&A

BY MATTHEW SENREICH



MEN-AT-ARMS (From left) Quesada, Smith and Palmiotti get down to work.

PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

L ghts

"**This** has always been a dream to write *Daredevil*," Kevin Smith says as a smile spreads over his round, bearded face. "I never thought I'd find myself writing a comic book—or even be in the Marvel offices, for that matter."

But that's exactly where Smith is on an overcast June day in New York City. Grayness filters through the window of Marvel Comics' 13th floor office space where comic artists Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti have set up their operation for "Marvel Knights," a new comic line launching in September. Smith, Quesada and Palmiotti are all here, their personalities defying the weather outside. There's an energy among them as they chat—a scrappy, underdog bond that good friends always have.

And that vibe is what "Marvel Knights" seems to be all about. Quesada and Palmiotti—a long-time penciler and inker team and founders of Event Comics—recently signed on with Marvel to oversee all aspects of four comics: *Daredevil*, *Black Panther*, *Inhumans* and *Punisher*. Their goal? To tell brass-knuckled, straightforward stories and to get talent to take a fresh look at some of Marvel's second-tier heroes.

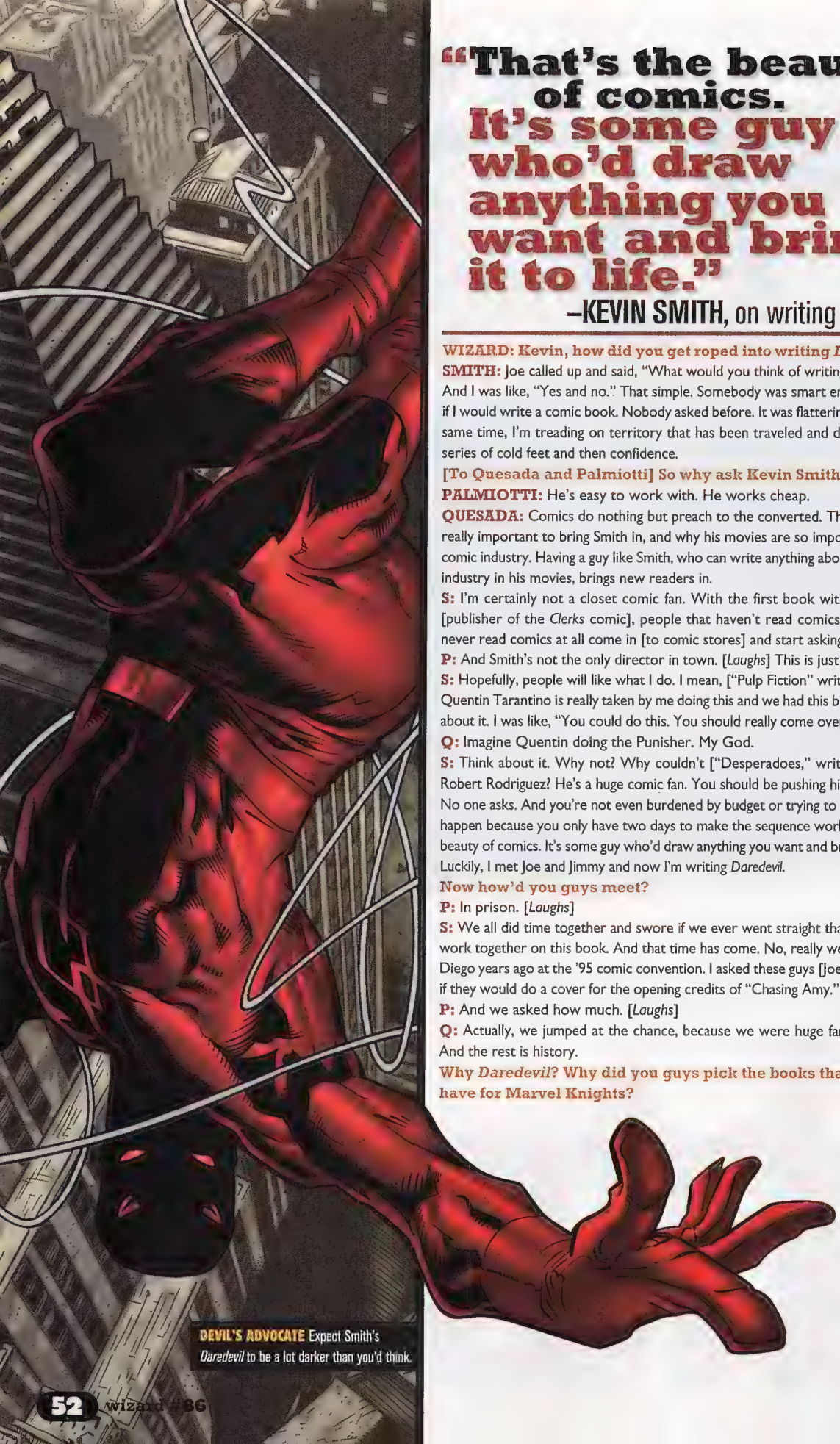
And that's where Smith, the director of acclaimed films "Clerks" and "Chasing Amy," comes in. He's writing six issues of *Daredevil*, giving readers his take on the crimefighter, pursuing the darker side of Daredevil and his city.

But you'd never guess that if you saw Smith in the "Knights" office. The 28-year-old lounges on a couch, perusing a stack of Marvel comics and thoughtfully chewing the drawstring of his raggedy blue-hooded sweatshirt. Palmiotti rolls across the office on his swivel chair and tosses a handful of new comics on the table by Smith's knees.

Quesada, reclining beside Smith, quips: "You need anything else?"

Smith glances up from his comic—only for a second—and good-naturedly swears at Quesada. The friends laugh and trade insults as conversation ricochets from co-workers to lawless escapades to women. There's that scrappy, underdog bond shining through, that frat-house mentality at its most basic...where three guys talk trash—and comics.

Can you imagine it any other way?



DEVIL'S ADVOCATE Expect Smith's *Daredevil* to be a lot darker than you'd think.

"That's the beauty of comics. It's some guy who'd draw anything you want and bring it to life."

–KEVIN SMITH, on writing comics

WIZARD: Kevin, how did you get roped into writing *Daredevil*?

SMITH: Joe called up and said, "What would you think of writing *Daredevil*?" And I was like, "Yes and no." That simple. Somebody was smart enough to ask if I would write a comic book. Nobody asked before. It was flattering, but at the same time, I'm treading on territory that has been traveled and defined. It's a series of cold feet and then confidence.

[To Quesada and Palmiotti] So why ask Kevin Smith?

PALMIOTTI: He's easy to work with. He works cheap.

QUESADA: Comics do nothing but preach to the converted. That's why it's really important to bring Smith in, and why his movies are so important to the comic industry. Having a guy like Smith, who can write anything about the comic industry in his movies, brings new readers in.

S: I'm certainly not a closet comic fan. With the first book with Oni Press [publisher of the *Clerks* comic], people that haven't read comics in years or never read comics at all come in [to comic stores] and start asking about it.

P: And Smith's not the only director in town. [*Laughs*] This is just a first step.

S: Hopefully, people will like what I do. I mean, ["Pulp Fiction" writer/director] Quentin Tarantino is really taken by me doing this and we had this big discussion about it. I was like, "You could do this. You should really come over and try it."

Q: Imagine Quentin doing the Punisher. My God.

S: Think about it. Why not? Why couldn't ["Desperadoes," writer/director] Robert Rodriguez? He's a huge comic fan. You should be pushing him on it too. No one asks. And you're not even burdened by budget or trying to make a shot happen because you only have two days to make the sequence work. That's the beauty of comics. It's some guy who'd draw anything you want and bring it to life. Luckily, I met Joe and Jimmy and now I'm writing *Daredevil*.

Now how'd you guys meet?

P: In prison. [*Laughs*]

S: We all did time together and swore if we ever went straight that we would work together on this book. And that time has come. No, really we met at San Diego years ago at the '95 comic convention. I asked these guys [Joe and Jimmy] if they would do a cover for the opening credits of "Chasing Amy."

P: And we asked how much. [*Laughs*]

Q: Actually, we jumped at the chance, because we were huge fans of Kevin. And the rest is history.

Why *Daredevil*? Why did you guys pick the books that you have for Marvel Knights?

Q: Jimmy and I have always been fond of the grittier, urban heroes. We also have more of an affinity for less-superpowered superheroes.

S: So aside from Daredevil's heightened senses by virtue of the fact that he's born from a radioactive isotope, he's just a dude. He doesn't fly or shoot stuff out of his chest. It's so much easier to get into a character that could be you. Aside from the fact that I can say that I'm not as sculpted as Matt Murdock and I'm not a lawyer…what's to stop me?

P: …Gravity? But you'd look good in tights.

What about a book like *The Inhumans*? That's not really street-level.

Q: True, but we're doing a more human approach to them. We're defining what it is to be Inhuman by discovering more about humanity and looking at ourselves in the mirror. We see ourselves through them. There's so many correlations between Inhumans and humans, or just human everyday life. The Inhumans have this subculture and a species which was created to do slave work for them that they eventually did liberate. But somehow they can't seem to be able to break out of the mode of being workers. The whole thing is that each issue is never driven by the same character. It's always going to be a different take than the last.

And there's this new take on the Punisher where he takes on the supernatural.

Q: The Punisher's problem till now was that he was one-dimensional.

P: Sort of like David Hasselhoff's character on "Baywatch." You really don't care about him. You just want to get down to the beach and see the girls. But he's the main guy. Everytime [Hasselhoff] was on, I just wanted to switch over to the another station until Pam [Anderson] was back on.

S: Only Jimmy could make a relation between the Punisher and "Baywatch."

Q: The Punisher's solved his reason for being. He eventually got his vengeance and killed the people who killed his family. Batman never found his family's murderers. What we're giving Frank Castle in the *Punisher* series is a second, third, fourth and fifth dimension. What's happening with Frank is he's going to discover something in this four-issue story where the readers go, "I can't believe it."

P: It's a four-issue mini-series. It's Bernie Wrightson art. There's guns, there's demons, there's angels, there's more guns, there's blood and gore.

What makes Black Panther cool?

Q: We're talking about the king of an African nation that is one of the most highly technological nations in the Marvel Universe. He's got these two girls, skimpily dressed. This guy is an Avenger. This guy can kick your ass.

P: I'm looking forward to when we do the story of why he became an Avenger, because we have to reestablish his feelings towards them. We'll learn what his motivations for joining were.

Where does *Daredevil* jump off? Does it start with Scott Lobdell's "Flying Blind" story [issues #376-#379] or Dan Chichester's solo story [#380]?

P: We're jumping forward six months with everybody's life. We've got Frank Castle's life in six months. Matt Murdock's life in six months. Inhumans and Black Panther in six months.

S: We're at a place that seems to happen to Matt Murdock an awful lot throughout the history of *Daredevil*. He's at rock-bottom. He's always had ladies and, with that, problems. And the story is not your run-of-the-mill "taking on a mob" story. It definitely introduces a character that can be utilized in the Marvel Universe for years to come and almost puts a ticking clock on the Marvel Universe. It's got a lot of theological implications.

So, it's a more serious angle than the lighthearted run written by Joe Kelly [*Daredevil* #365-#375]?

S: And definitely more so than Karl Kesel's run [#353-#364], which was a nice breath of fresh air. Mine isn't so lighthearted. No costume change. We're playing with some of the characters that if you were writing a *Daredevil* story that you would love to play around with. Some of the historic guys, some of the guys that have been around for awhile. No Kingpin. No Elektra. She's dead.

Bullseye?

S: [*Pauses*] I…don't want to rule that out.

How about other villains? Just general Marvel Universe villains that you're going to bring in.

KNIGHTTIME

Wanna know what the Marvel Knight books are about? Here's a synopsis of the four titles, beginning in September.

Daredevil

Relaunched with an all-new *Daredevil* #1, the first six-issue story arc by Kevin Smith, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti story tests Matt Murdock's faith to its limits. Daredevil has been given the task of protecting a child, but the question is: Is he defending the right person from what he thinks are evil forces? Or is the child he's protecting the true evil force?

The Inhumans

Writer Paul Jenkins and artist Jae Lee give us a tale set in the Inhumans' city of Attilan. With each issue told from a different point of view, we see the city and its people, observing what it's like to be an Inhuman. But as with any utopian society, there's always a flaw, hints of which will be revealed each issue. And ultimately, that flaw can doom all the Inhumans. ▲

Black Panther

Writer Christopher Priest and artist Mark Texeira bring the former Avenger back to America. In his civilian identity of T'Challa, King of the African nation Wakanda, Panther arrives in America to investigate a murder that occurred at a charitable organization that's been funded by Wakanda. The Panther quickly sets up shop in Brooklyn to solve the mystery. ◀

The Punisher

Writers Tom Sniegoski and Christopher Golden and artists Bernie Wrightson and Jimmy Palmiotti have given Marvel's vigilante a new spin. Frank Castle discovers that his career as the Punisher was not exactly what he thought it was. There were other forces manipulating his life and nothing in Castle's past is what it seems. Castle's been given a second chance at life and this is his story of redemption. And if anybody needs redemption, it's Castle. ▼ ■ **Matthew Senreich**

KNIGHT AND DAY

If anything, when you hang out with Kevin Smith, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, you're gonna get their opinions about everything and anything. We figured we'd take advantage of that and play a little word association with the boys.

Superman movie
Smith: The one that got away.
Palmiotti: Missed opportunity.
Quesada: What happened?

Lesbians
Quesada: Love to watch.
Smith: Best reviews to date.
Palmiotti: Bread and butter.

Jack Kirby
Quesada: The spirit of Marvel.
Palmiotti: King.
Smith: Why? I know everyone, artists particularly, are huge Kirby fans, but I just never got it.
Palmiotti: I'll make you understand it.

Star Wars
Palmiotti: Been there.
Smith: Old reliable.
Quesada: I don't get it.

Beer
Palmiotti: Okay.
Smith: Not a drinker.
Quesada: Nature's broom.

Marvel Comics
Quesada: Getting better.
Smith: Chapter 11.
Palmiotti: Boss.

Rob Liefeld
Palmiotti: Who?
Smith: Chapter 11.
Quesada: When's the comeback?

ON THE SPOT Matt gives the boys a little word association.

S: You might see a hint of Mephisto.

With Kingpin being out of the picture, who's going to be taking over the underworld?

S: Kingpin's not out of the picture.

Q: He's in New York. And when he gets back in Matt Murdock's life it's gonna be big. Kingpin's broken Murdock. Murdock's broken him. So what could actually bring these guys together again to go for round whatever? When it happens, it's gonna be real messed up.

S: David Mack will be doing that [in the relaunched *Daredevil* #7-#12].

And what of supporting characters like Karen Page and Foggy Nelson?

S: She's moved on from the radio station. Foggy, we start with him working at the law firm with Matt. Know that nobody's revamping or throwing out everything that's happened in the last 10 years of the book.

Are there going to be any Silent Bob and Jay walk-ons in *Daredevil*?

P: Y'know, Kevin forbade us from doing that.

S: I did. I was poisoned by a fan. When they first caught wind that I was doing *Daredevil*, one fan started a conversation and was like, "You've got to keep Jay and Silent Bob out. Let's see if you can do something without them." It was like a dare. There's somewhat of a Jay and Bob appearance, but you have to find it. You have to be real good. It's in the first issue.

Q: As a matter of fact we've got to give a prize for whoever can find Jay and Bob.

You've just opened up the eyes of about a million fans.

Q: Nobody will find it.

S: Especially if they're looking with their eyes, they'll never find it.

Now do you think that you're doing a 13th issue? I know there was a rumor of you doing *Daredevil* #13.

S: I'm gonna do this initial story line and hopefully David Mack will come in and work a little of his magic. Maybe somewhere down the line, if the dudes still have *Daredevil*, I'll come back. Daredevil is Marvel Comics to me. It's the one character that I always really liked out of that stable. He'd make the best movie.

If you could do a Daredevil movie, what would you do?

S: Collect a fat paycheck. [*Laughs*] You would want to tell an early tale like [writer] Frank Miller's *Daredevil: The Man Without Fear* mini-series. In the first feature, you don't want to bring in Elektra. You'd want to focus on the Kingpin. I'd be curious to see how it panned out myself.

Who would you cast as Matt Murdock?

S: Matt Damon [star of "Good Will Hunting"]. Matt's a fan of Daredevil. A really big fan. It came up in conversation one day. I was shocked by how much he knew. He even has a run of *Daredevil* comics.

What's the likelihood that you'd pitch a script?

S: I wouldn't hesitate to do it, but that's such an arrogant thing. We'll see.

Would you want to direct it?

S: It's too big for a guy like me. I like to write. I don't like to direct action films actually. Robert Rodriguez would be a genius choice for it. I know he likes *Daredevil*.

What did you think of the whole process surrounding the Superman movie? It's currently in production limbo.

S: I had a good time working on Superman. No real regrets. I have regrets about [director] Tim Burton screwing it up, but Warner Bros. was really good. [Producer] Jon Peters was something of a loopy individual himself and was just a little bit too kooky, I think. A lot of what happened with that movie is pride. It was cats that didn't understand that character in the least, trying to catch lightning in a bottle and basically do a Batman on a character that you can't. Superman and Batman are two completely different characters and Tim was just the wrong guy for the project. And Jon Peters just doesn't understand Superman. You can make the argument that he understands Batman or understands a portion of it, but Superman, not in the least.

Are you still involved with the Superman movie? There's a rumor you're going to do another script rewrite.

S: [*Laughs*] You're pulling out all the tricky questions. We'll see what the future holds, but right now, the answer is no.

What about your immediate future? When your *Daredevil* run is completed, would you write any other comic books?

S: There's talks of doing *Green Arrow*, but we'll see what happens there. But when I was cruising around the office downstairs, seeing that Mjolnir hammer…there's something about playing with the fact that Thor is a god. But I'd probably just want to cross him over into another book.

I still have all of the Oni Press stuff that we're doing. Most recently, a *Jay and Silent Bob* series that started up in July. Outside of that, I don't know. I tend to always want characters that have been done superbly before. The challenge would be to take a character that I'm really not all that familiar with or not even really a big fan of and see if I can do something to it. Right now, I'll stick to *Daredevil* and in six months, ask me again.

P: Just stick with the Knights. It's safer for you.

Wizard Staff Writer Matthew Senreich was brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe.

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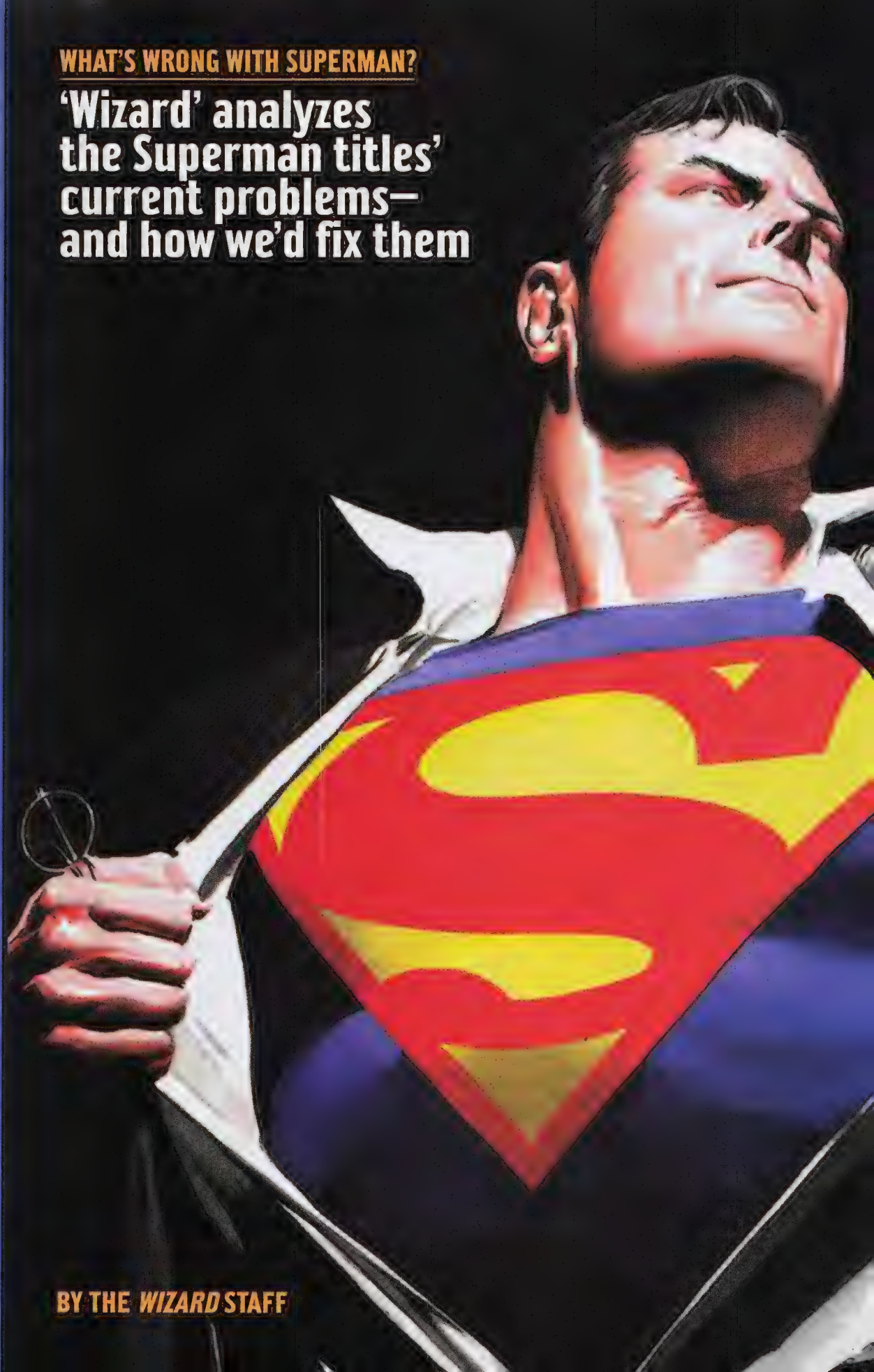
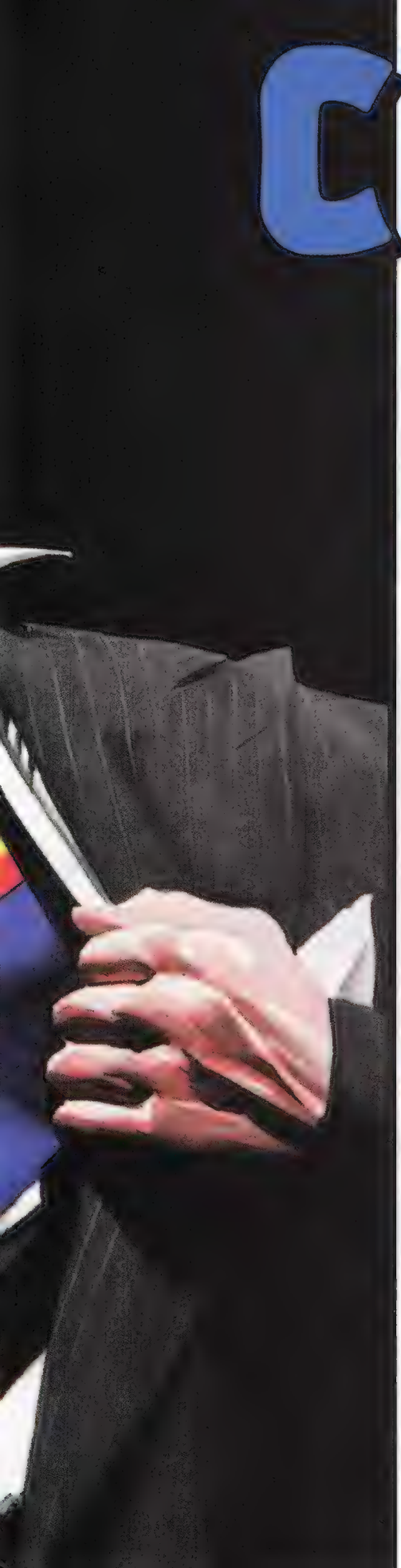
WHAT'S WRONG WITH SUPERMAN?

'Wizard' analyzes the Superman titles' current problems— and how we'd fix them



BY THE *WIZARD* STAFF



CLARK CAN'T

HE'S THE MAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING.

Good looks. A cool job. A secret identity. Unmatched power. Integrity. But there's one thing missing from Superman these days. Excitement.

And that's the one thing fans have come to expect from comics' most iconic character. But lately, DC Comics has tried to sustain the Man of Steel's success with stunts and events rather than solid stories.

The origin of this can be traced back to Superman's high point, "The Death of Superman" storyline in 1992, which set a benchmark for Superman's popularity and sales. Buoyed by the success of "Death of Superman," DC became "big-event" conscious and delivered us such storylines as "Electro Supes," "The Death of Clark Kent" and "Superman: The Wedding Album."

But these big events have come at the expense of characterization. As a result, problems have ensued: the supporting cast has grown to chaotic proportions, Clark has no romantic problems, retro-ideas have stagnated him and his villains aren't challenging enough to pose a threat to the Man of Steel.

As one of the greatest characters of all-time, we here at *Wizard* figured we'd reiterate what makes Superman great, how he has strayed from these points and how we'd steer the Man of Steel back in the right direction.

STORIES, NOT EVENTS

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Simple and direct. At least most of the time. That way, when a monumental "Death of Superman" comes along every once in a while—it *is* an event.

Superman's best stories come from one-shot deals or two-parters, not lengthy crossovers or extended arcs. A good example comes from the annual one-shot Christmas issues where Superman goes to the Metropolis Post Office to read all the mail that's accumulated over the year. This type of story always bring a human-interest element to the Man of Steel, giving more layers to his heroics.

THE WAY IT IS: Let's face it, if Christmas was every week, it wouldn't be special. That's what Superman has become: an event-driven hero with no punch. The smash-hit "Death of Superman" worked because it came out of nowhere, surrounded by simple stories.

Practically every story since "Death" six years ago has been a gimmick in a bad suit, at the expense of simple, entertaining stories. "Reign of the Supermen" (four different replacement Supermen were introduced), "Dead Again" (Superman is deemed an impostor when his corpse is found), "Death of Clark Kent" (Supes gives up being Clark when his friends are endangered by someone who knows he's Superman) *Superman: The Wedding Album* (Clark and Lois get hitched), "Electro Superman" (Supes

SUPERMAN UNPLUGGED We weren't charged up by the "Electro Superman."

gets new costume and powers) "Millennium Giants" (a giant crossover with beings threatening to destroy Earth) and *Superman Forever* (the return of the classic suit and powers)—all have been the obligatory Superman stunts trying to top the "Death" success.

Superman Forever is the latest—and perhaps most controversial—event. DC was so hot to get Superman back in his classic costume using his classic powers, that the high-priced one-shot did just that. But what it *didn't* do is explain how he got them back. Instead, Supes just wakes up in a Kansas field and assumes he was somehow "rewarded" with his old powers for saving the Earth from the Millennium Giants. Readers who endured the whole "Electro Superman" storyline got the event, but were gypped on plot.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Keep it simple. Don't sacrifice storytelling for marketing. Grand sweeping storylines are great, but not if they rely on one gimmick and then drag it out for months. Yes, changing Superman's costume will get you mentioned in *Entertainment Weekly*, but that's only half the job. Make sure the story around the event is strong enough where new readers won't be turned off to comics completely and longtime readers don't feel like they're getting the short end of the stick.

ROGUES GALLERY

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Heavyweights in brawn *and* brain. Every issue, Superman should stare down explosive villains among the likes of Mongul and Conduit who can pack a wallop to challenge Big Blue. And then he should face shifty manipulators like Lex Luthor and Brainiac who test his Super-noggin.

Luthor, specifically, should be the quintessential Superman nemesis. He is the puppet master behind practically everything bad in the city he "owns," namely Metropolis. He's intelligent, arrogant, passionate and seemingly above the law.

His hands are never sullied and neither is his name. Whenever he shows up, readers should hear ominous music. And regardless of the crime, he comes away clean.

THE WAY IT IS: Super-lame. The Man of Steel's rogues gallery has always been on the weak side, catering more to pests than to powerhouses.

Nuisances like Mr. Mxyzptlk, Prankster and Toyman have been the "challenges" of choice for Superman, with the real menaces either cast aside or completely mishandled.

Conduit had potential, but was killed outright. Brainiac is stuck in a mid-1960s costume design and relegated to "seen it all before" mind-control storylines. Bizarro has reverted into the "Me Bizarro am dumb" pre-*Crisis* joke that forced DC to revamp Superman in the first place. The Eradicator, once one of the most dangerous (and best-designed) Superman villains, took the route of Marvel's Venom, becoming a quasi-hero instead of ruthless villain. The Cyborg—who destroyed Coast City, claiming millions of lives—shows up practically every six months giving his appearances zero impact.

MR. MXYZPTS–1 Forget chumps like Mxyzptlk (above)! We want Mongul and Eradicator!

The worst travesty of all is the current state of Lex Luthor, *the* villain of Superman villains. Over the past 10 years, he has died of Kryptonite poisoning, his brain was transferred into a younger cloned body of himself, his cloned body deteriorated, but was made hunky when revived by Neron. Now he has a baby daughter, whom he is grooming to take over his empire. By begging Superman to return her when she was kidnapped in *Superman Forever*, Luthor has exposed to Superman something about himself he would never, *ever* allow: a weakness.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: He's Superman. SUPERMAN! And his rogues gallery is the Prankster, Toyman and Mr. Mxyzptlk? Note to DC: hire out Marvel's Punisher and kill those villains off! Superman's rogues gallery should be the most fearsome collection of bad-asses in the universe! Set up Mongul and Brainiac as the ruthless monsters they are! Don't overuse the Cyborg or Doomsday—make their appearances count! Find a way to bring back Conduit and the Eradicator! And try and find a way to make Bizarro more than a joke.

PURE EVIL Even without his Kryptonite ring, Luthor always used to give Superman a run for his money. And he got away with it *every single time*.

SUPPORTING CAST

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: They support *Clark*, not Superman. And the cast should stay true to the core of Supes' cast: Ma and Pa Kent, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen and Perry White. Everyone else isn't a regular.

THE WAY IT IS: The supporting cast members have become the stars. Superman is merely a guy who shares time with the rest of his cast. Why? Because there are waaaay too many supporting cast members, vying for space. There's Lois, Jimmy, Perry, Ma and Pa Kent, Cat Grant, Ronald Troupe, Lori Lemaris, Dirk Armstrong, Franklin Stern, Simone DeNiege, Professor Hamilton, Maggie Sawyer, Dan "Terrible" Turpin, Commissioner Bill Henderson, Bibbo, Scorn and...well, you get the idea.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Cut down on the supporting cast and underline the word SUPPORTING. Readers are buying SUPERMAN comics and should get what they pay for. Then clean house on the dead weight like Bibbo, Lori Lemaris and Scorn.

POWERS

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Creativity is the key. The world's most powerful man should be given challenges that allow him to use his powers in entertaining, dramatic ways. Supes should think his way out of a predicament using his abilities rather than crushing a death trap with his hands and then punching out the villain.

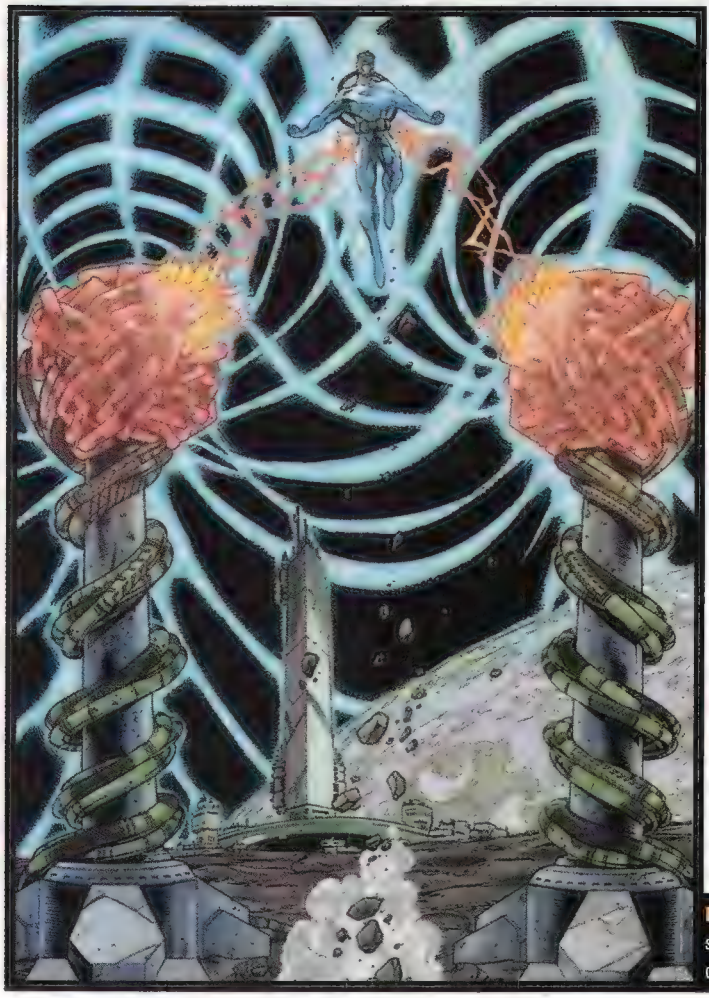
Here are a couple of examples. In *Superman* #9, Joker hides bombs in lead coffins believing Supes won't be able to see 'em (his X-ray vision can't see through lead); but the lead boxes stood out simply because Superman *couldn't* see through them when he scanned the city with his X-ray and telescopic vision. Or in *Superman Annual* #11, Mongul's got Superman by the throat and Supes snarls "Burn," and a "Ssshizzzzziit!" sound effect follows a sizzling streak across Mongul's chest. Now *that's* dramatic!

Heck, even the fact that Superman shaves by reflecting his heat vision off a small piece of his Kryptonian rocket ship is a neat touch.

THE WAY IT IS: Superman lacks a sense of drama. Why? Instead of thinking his way through a predicament, he blasts his way out. Sure, it ain't easy trying to challenge a guy who can do almost anything—but that's no excuse not to try (like in Superman's first battle with Doomsday where they both *YAWN* punched each other to death).

The most entertaining use of Superman's electrical powers wasn't even in any of his own books, but in *JLA* #7. When the moon was hurtling into the Earth, a trapped Superman races the clock using his electro-magnetic powers to repel the moon away.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Make Superman sweat. While he'll need all his powers to help him do the job, "the job" must be something that super-strength alone can't fix. He's got to be stymied by Luthor's behind-the-scenes machinations, kept off-balance by the "why is the world crazy?" mind-bending powers of Brainiac, seemingly helpless before the environment-altering powers of the Eradicator and outclassed by the lethal blows of Doomsday.



POWERFUL STUFF Superman uses a bit of science to go with his powers, repelling a crashing moon away from Earth.

ROMANTIC TENSION

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Clark Kent has options. While enduring Cat Grant's advances, Clark should be getting an earful from Lois who's *really* steamed that Clark beat her to that Intergang exposé. For a guy who can do anything as Superman, making his personal life a roller-coaster ride is critical to make him a balanced character.

THE WAY IT IS: Steady romance killed the television show "Moonlighting" and it's doing the same to Superman. Heck, the "Lois and Clark" TV show never had the same excitement after the two were married. Marriage completely removes any romantic tension from Superman's life.

In the comics' defense, the creators were definitely going in the right direction by calling off Lois and Clark's engagement. But, in keeping with the TV show, the decision was made to have Clark and Lois marry in the comics also.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Clark and Lois should be rivals, not married. By separating or divorcing them, it would open up a lot of romantic possibilities. Plus, it would be fun to see Clark walk on eggshells again whenever he interacted with Lois.

SPLIT 'EM UP Things were much spicier when Lois and Clark weren't hitched.

PERSONALITY

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: The focus is less on the "Super" and more on the "Man." No matter how much he can press, how far he can see or how fast he can fly...he's still just a country boy from a small Kansas farm. Like anybody, he has doubts and concerns. In his quest for justice, he will make mistakes. For even a Kryptonian, he's all-too-human. And that connection makes readers care all the more about him.

Toss in the fact that if Lex Luthor, the most evil man in the world with enough resources to do virtually anything, wanted you humiliated and killed more than anything else, you'd be a bit paranoid too.

THE WAY IT IS: Bor-ring! Because of the Super-book's large supporting cast, Clark has become a bit player in a big soap opera of subplots, few of which involve him. There's not enough room for Clark to be a well-rounded character. The last subplot that included Clark was when he took over as *Daily Planet* managing editor for ailing Perry White. It was interesting because the super-busy Clark was placed in a big position of responsibility, but the subplot ended abruptly with Perry returning to work. There was no punch to it at all; maybe Clark wouldn't want to give it up, or be wary that Perry was coming back too soon. Nothing. Nada. 'Zilch.

Clark is no longer just a regular guy with regular fears—instead, he's the guy who knows he can become Superman and do anything he wants. He's married, so he has no romantic pitfalls to overcome. He's a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, so he's got no job insecurity. As Superman, he's the idol of millions, so no bad p.r. is likely.

Sure, the "Electro Supes" story threw him for a loop, but now that he's back to normal, let's hope he gets shaken up sometimes.

As Superman, Clark used to be a bit more paranoid. He'd vibrate his face super-fast in public that would only be noticeable in a blurry photograph ensuring his identity wasn't compromised. This cool li'l bit has been tossed by the wayside over the years.

If anything, Luthor, one of the world's smartest and richest men, should *make* him really paranoid. Luthor's the guy who believes no man is bigger than he in Metropolis, and has made it his life mission to destroy Superman and smear his name in the process. Any villain the Man of Steel faces, any pitfall he encounters, any friends that are harmed—all could be Luthor's way to strike at his nemesis.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Make this Kryptonian a human being. Involve Clark in more subplots that make his seemingly perfect life less than perfect. Focus on his work life, in addition to his superhero life. When he's Superman, make him sweat more. All in all, bring the Man of Steel down to earth. That way, he can fly again.

KEEP IT MODERN

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Superman is called the Man of Tomorrow for a reason. His stories should be modern and reflect new ideas. He's a reporter who's hip to pop culture. He lives in Metropolis, DC's acknowledged modern city.

THE WAY IT IS: There's too much "retro" in Superman. Yeah, we realize Big Blue's 60 years old, but readers don't have to *know* that. Superman Red/Superman Blue was a dopey idea the first time around 30 years ago—why retread it? Dan "Terrible" Turpin wears a derby hat from the 1930s. The Newsboy Legion members are obvious leftovers from 1940s. And that brings us to the recent "retro-timeline" storylines where Superman is shown in outfits from different points in history: 1930s, 1950s and 2999. As soon as readers get Superman back in the classic costume in *Superman Forever* after a year layoff, they're forced to read a storyline where he's *not* the real Superman?

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Leave the past where it belongs. Readers don't want the Man of *Yesterday*.

THE BIG SECRET

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: With few exceptions, nobody knows his secret identity. Ma and Pa Kent know, 'cause, c'mon, they're his folks (and his ma sews his costumes). There's Batman, since the world's greatest detective would make it his business to know these things (but he would never let Superman *know* he knows it). And there's Lana, the girl who knows she can never have a Superman who belongs to the world.

THE WAY IT IS: Too many people know. There's Lois, Ma and Pa, Lana, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Supergirl, Martian

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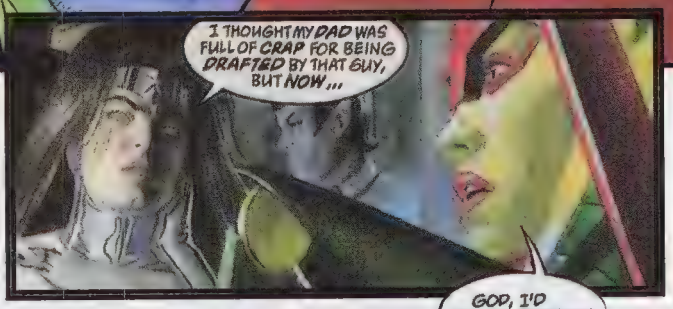
Manhunter, Colin Thornton, Lori Lemaris, Phantom Stranger, Dr. Occult and Mr. Mxyzptlk.

Those who know it, flaunt it waaaay too much. The Supes/Batman relationship is treated in a very cavalier manner; they should be uneasy with the fact that they both know something they shouldn't.

The most recent example of secret i.d. no-nos: In *Action Comics* #747, Lois and Supes kiss in public! (Read: IN FRONT OF PEOPLE.) Isn't that a bit, oh we dunno, *risky*? Geeeeez.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Barring some mindwipes, you can't really take away the fact that a lotta folks know Superman's identity. But they don't have to *acknowledge* they know it. It IS a secret, y'know.



NO RESPECT Folks in the Superman Universe are just a little too comfortable around the Man of Steel; no one seems impressed. We want a little more wide-eyed wonder (right). Even other superheroes gave Supes his due in *Kingdom Come* (below).

FORMAT

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Less is more. Two books make it easier to collect Superman. When Superman was relaunched in 1986, there were only two books to follow, *Superman* and *Adventures of Superman*, both independent of one another. (NOTE: *Action Comics* was a team-up book that rarely tied into the other books). If you bought both, great. If you only bought one, you didn't feel like you're missing out on anything.

THE WAY IT IS: Too much is no good. The weekly format of four to five books each month telling an ongoing story doesn't work for two reasons. 1) If you don't like a particular Super-title, you're obligated to buy it just to keep up with the Man of Steel. 2) It costs $8-$10 a month to collect the big guy's books. It's a lot to ask of fans these days.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: Take a cue from the Spider-Man folks across town: pare down to two books (*Superman* and *Action*)!

SENSE OF GRANDEUR

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: This guy is *it*. He's Elvis, Schwarzenegger, and Michael Jordan all rolled into one. So whenever he shows up, the readers gotta know it means something. The windswept cape, the flow of the spitcurl, the swoop in his flight pattern...all that's gotta count, 'cause he's SUPERMAN.

The best example is this can be taken from "Superman: The Movie" when he flies up the side of the skyscraper to catch a plummeting Lois Lane. No matter how many times you watch it, you find yourself in awe of this American icon.

THE WAY IT IS: You catch it in every title but his own monthlies. In the first issue of the *Superman For All Seasons* mini-series, the way Superman is drawn and portrayed when he saves a boy falling off a ledge, the way, it makes you go, "Wowww." *JLA* also does it wonderfully—Green Lantern and Flash have a sense of wonder whenever Superman enters the room. Even in *Kingdom Come* #1, readers were left breathless when an out-of-retirement Supes floats down to a stunned crowd, the sun glistening off him.

Sometimes the Superman books will have it, but most of the time they take for granted their star *is* Superman.

HOW WE'D FIX IT: With the exception of the most hard-core heroes, villains and supporting cast (Batman, Wonder Woman, Lois and Luthor), just about everyone who interacts with Supes would feel slightly nervous. Not only is he the ultimate celebrity, not only is he a living legend, but this is the guy who could crush diamonds to powder and punch a hole through the planet. If he doesn't make you feel nervous, you don't have a pulse.

The Wizard Staff's adrenalin still gets pumping when Supes first shows up and saves Lois from falling in "Superman: The Movie." Man, that's what Superman is all about!

THE FUTURE

He's cheated death.

Once you get past that, Superman can get past anything. Even his current creative woes.

• **NEW BLOOD**–At summer's end, the Super-books will see new takes on the Man of Steel. Doug Mahnke (*Major Bummer*) and Steve Epting (*Excalibur*) will join the Man of Steel's art crew, while Mark Schultz (*Xenozoic Tales*) and former Super-guy Jerry Ordway will come aboard as new writers. Hopefully this injection of youth and experience will drive the Man of Steel to new heights. We're especially pumped to see what Mahnke does on *Superman: The Man of Steel*; he drew a super-buff hero in *Major Bummer*, so his version of Supes should be how it should be.

• **SUPERMAN: YEAR ONE**–The four-issue *Superman For All Seasons* is almost over, but pick it up if you haven't. Seeing a rookie Superman in his first year in costume is a lot of fun. Watch him as he struggles with romance and acceptance as Clark, along with being manipulated by Luthor as Superman.

• **ALEX ROSS**–Superman's beaten Brainiac and Mongul, but can he beat world hunger? That's the concept behind *Superman: Peace on Earth* by painter Alex Ross (*Kingdom Come*) and writer Paul Dini (producer/writer of the Superman animated series). Befitting comics' most powerful hero, this 64-page one-shot will be printed in an oversized format with big flashy painted art with blocks of story told as prose. And if you thought Ross aced the Man of Steel in *Kingdom Come*, you'll want to check out his classic Supes in *Peace on Earth*. ■**The *Wizard* Staff**

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CASTING call

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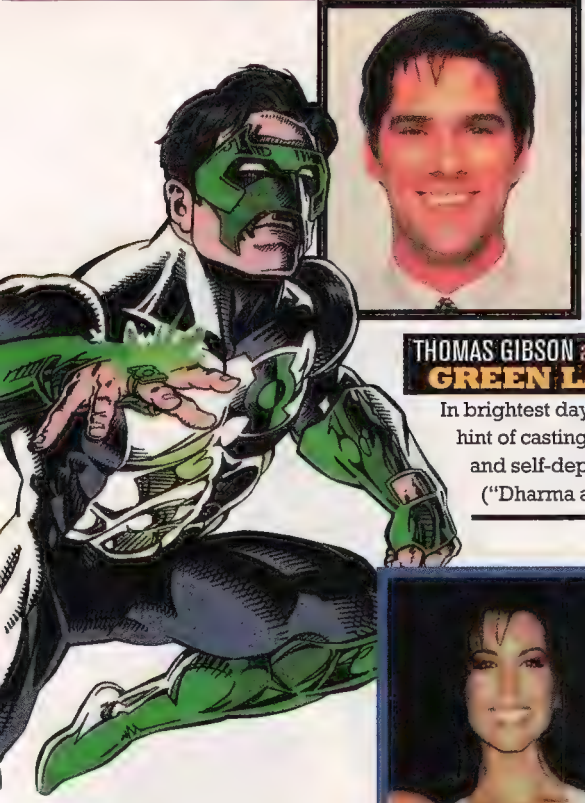
To help out our Hollywood buds, we've already cast our own "Justice League" movie, complete with larger-than-life heroes and lower-than-pond scum villains.

So sit back and enjoy the spectacle. We've got a great cast for a great movie.

Script, anyone?

BRUCE CAMPBELL as SUPERMAN

With powers far beyond those of mortal men, lantern-jawed matinee idol Bruce Campbell ("Army of Darkness") is impervious to a bad performance. He'll soar as our Superman.



THOMAS GIBSON as GREEN LANTERN

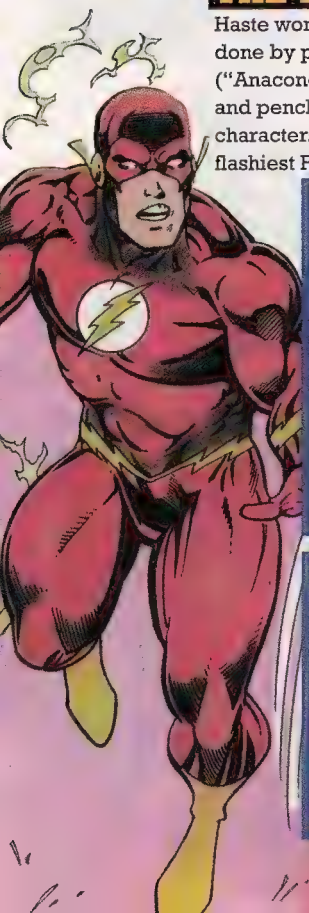
In brightest day, in blackest night, there is no hint of casting plight—beware the sensitive and self-deprecating Thomas Gibson's ("Dharma and Greg") acting might!

RACHEL McLISH as WONDER WOMAN

She's a real-life wonder woman cast as her comic alter-ego. Sculpted muscle-babe Rachel McLish ("Ravenhawk") could tie us up with her Golden Lariat and force us to tell the truth just about any time she felt like it.

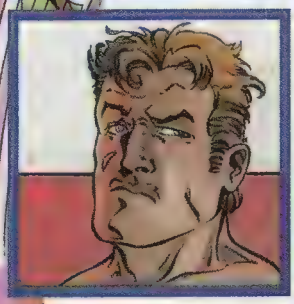
ALEC BALDWIN as BATMAN

Alec Baldwin ("The Edge") is the president of Hunkodyne Industries. Combine his suave demeanor, haughty acting style and chiseled good looks with a rubber Batsuit, and Vegas odds say we've got us a winning Batman.



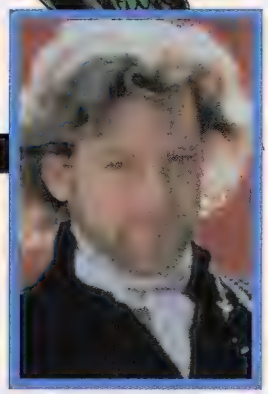
ERIC STOLTZ as THE FLASH

Haste won't make waste when it's done by pretty boy Eric Stoltz ("Anaconda"). With his red hair and penchant for playing goofy characters, Stoltz would be the flashiest Flash around.



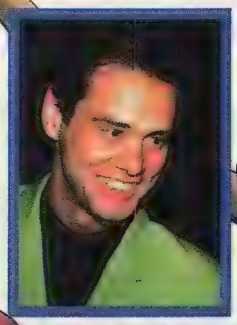
EVANDER HOLYFIELD as MARTIAN MANHUNTER

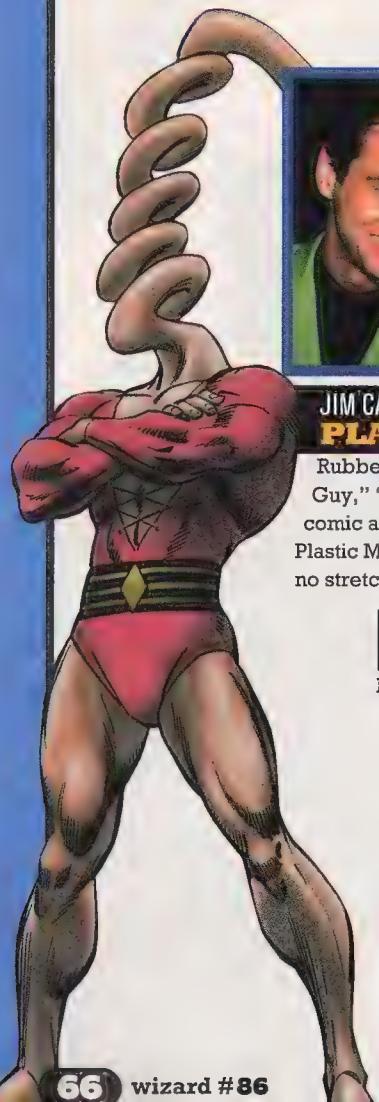
Friends, Romans, countrymen—lend us your ear. Beefy heavyweight fighter Evander Holyfield has the size and mental toughness to bring the Martian Manhunter to life.



KENNETH BRANAGH as AQUAMAN

Let's face it: Aquaman is a watery Prince Hamlet. Who better to play the troubled King of Atlantis than Kenneth Branagh, the man who kept the "Ham" out of the film version of "Hamlet"?





JIM CARREY as PLASTIC MAN

Rubber-faced goon Jim Carrey ("Cable Guy," "Truman Show") should find the comic antics of rubber-faced superhero Plastic Man—dare we say it?—absolutely no stretch at all.

LAURENCE FISHBURNE as STEEL

Laurence Fishburne from "Event Horizon" looks angry enough to have done major time encased in a heavy, sweaty suit of steel. As Steel, he'd be the grumpy man's armor-wearing superhero.

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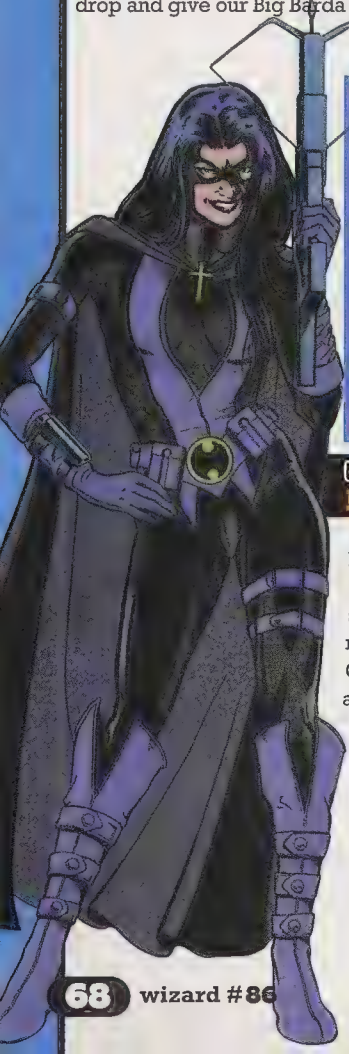
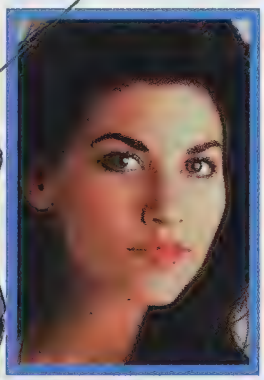
CHRISTIAN SLATER as ZAURIEL

Captain of the U.S.S. Hunkatania, Christian Slater ("Broken Arrow") looks ever the fallen angel—just like the JLA's ne'er-do-well cherub, Zauriel.





GINA GERSHON as HUNTRESS

"Showgirls" sucked like a Hoover vacuum—but its co-star Gina Gershon showed she could play an uncompromising, tough-as-nails *femme*. Give Gershon a crossbow and look out! We've got the JLA hardcase Huntress.

ROBIN LIVELY as ORACLE

When it's time to fill the tank with funk, Robin Lively's high-octane spunk and verve gets 25 miles to the gallon. She was great in "Karate Kid III." We're betting she'll excel as the wheelchair-bound Oracle.

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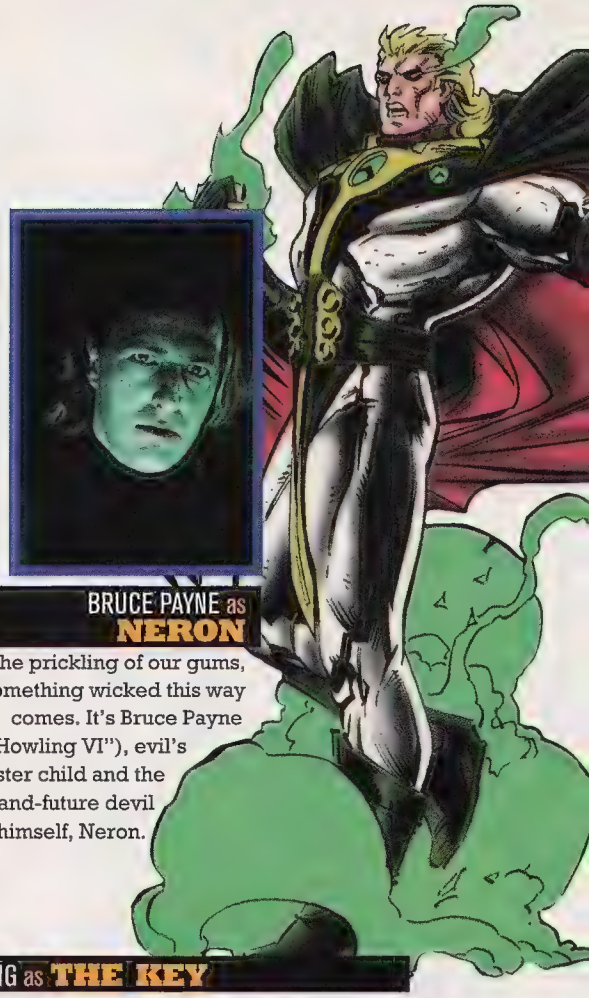
JAY O. SANDERS as ORION

Should we fail to cast creepy, brutish Jay O. Sanders ("Kiss the Girls") as the JLA's hulking super-brute Orion, he'd probably take us on a personal tour of Hurtingville.



BRUCE PAYNE as NERON

By the prickling of our gums, something wicked this way comes. It's Bruce Payne ("Howling VI"), evil's poster child and the once-and-future devil himself, Neron.

RON ELDARD as PROMETHEUS

In "Sleepers," Ron Eldard showed us how good it is to be bad. With a gaudy costume and evil snarl, Eldard just might take out the Justice League as the criminal genius Prometheus.

STING as THE KEY

Grizzled rock veteran Sting ("Dune") is so far over-the-top as an actor, his nose should be pouring blood. His turn as psychotic super-creep Key, to use the colorful lingo of the streets, would be key. (W)

QUIET ON THE SET!

LAURENCE FISHBURNE, JAY O. SANDERS, THOMAS GIBSON COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; ALEC BALDWIN, BRUCE PAYNE, BRUCE CAMPBELL COURTESY FOTO FANTASIES; EVANDER HOLYFIELD PHOTO COURTESY OF OUTLINE, TSAIH NA JOELSON/© JEFF SLOCOMB, JIM CARREY/© THOMAS LAU, GINA GERSON/© SUSAN SHACTER, RACHEL MCLISH/© GERARDO SOMZA, ROBIN LIVELY/© EJ CAMP, CHRISTIAN SLATER/© ANDREW MACPHERSON, STING/© BRIAN ARIS, RON ELDARD/© GRAG LAVAY, KENNETH BRANAGH/© ANNE-MARIE FOX.

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THE DARK KNIGHT FALLS

Clooney admits he may have 'destroyed the Batman franchise'

Is Batman really dead? Sure, he's still alive and well in comics, but if you ask actor George Clooney, the star of the 1997 "Batman and Robin" movie, the Dark Knight has hung up his tights.

"I'm the third Batman, and I destroyed that franchise," Clooney bluntly admitted. "I really think I buried that franchise. I don't think there will be another 'Batman.' I'm under contract to do it, but I just don't think Warner Bros. will do it again. It wasn't profitable enough for them to take the chance again. I could be wrong, we'll see. It'll probably have a lot to do with whether or not they actually do 'Superman.'"

Production on a proposed "Superman" film starring Nicolas Cage has been halted as rumors swirl that Warner Bros. is increasingly concerned about another big-budget failure such as the fourth "Batman" film, which starred Clooney, the popular actor from TV's "E.R."

Clooney may be right about killing the franchise, especially considering the film's numbers. With a reported budget of $110 million and domestic earnings of only $107 million, "Batman and Robin" wasn't profitable by any stretch of creative bookkeeping. Even adding in the overseas revenues of $130 million doesn't bring the production close to the black.

Criticism of "Batman and Robin" centered around too many characters and villains, terrible dialogue and an underdeveloped plot. From Clooney's point of view, "Batman and Robin" was more than just a financial flop.

"'Batman' was a tough year of work," Clooney said. "And that's a year out of your life. And a frustrating

BATTERED MAN Clooney thinks he killed the Bat-franchise and Warner Bros. might agree.

PHOTOS COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION.

year. Not just because it was kind of physically demanding to work seven days a week for a year. It was hard work, because I was doing ['E. R.'] and the movie at the same time. But it was also that the project wasn't great. It wasn't just about the box office being disappointing, which it was. The film itself was disappointing. And if I'm gonna play the role of Batman in 'Batman and Robin,' then I have to take some responsibility for that."

And being the stand-up guy that he is, Clooney is willing to go beyond just taking responsibility—he'll even shoulder the culpability.

"They can blame me if they want," he said. "I blame me for some of the things that went wrong with 'Batman.' But I did the best I could at the time. I look at it and go, 'I gave it my best shot. I don't know what more I could have done.'"

But is the "Batman" movie franchise dead? Perhaps it isn't as bleak an outlook as the actor paints. Warner Bros. may do another Bat-flick, but rumor has it Clooney may be replaced, with Kurt Russell possibly donning the cowl.

"I'd like another crack at ['Batman']—I'd love to do it again," Clooney admitted. "But I think I buried that franchise. It wouldn't be at all bad if they would deal with the character of a dark knight, which was an interesting character that I don't think they've ever really dealt with."

If another "Batman" film does come into being, with Clooney once again donning the pec-enhancing rubber costume, he knows that at least one element will be different next time out.

"I have to have more responsibility in the script—I have to take a more active role if I'm gonna make a living at this," he said with a wry smile. ■ **JENNY PETERS**

AOL POLL

DARK KNIGHTS

Batman yes, Clooney no. Yep, through an online poll, some 86 percent of the respondents said they'd like to see another Batman movie, but 82 percent want George Clooney out. Who should replace him? Well, **Michael Keaton** squashed the competition, as Alec Baldwin just edged out Kurt Russell, and poor Val Kilmer only snagged 8 percent.

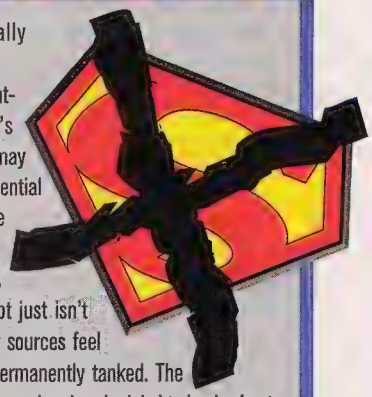
Michael Keaton 56%

Alec Baldwin 16%

Kurt Russell 14%

SUPERMAN: GROUNDED FOR GOOD?

BATMAN BUST MAY SPELL DOOM FOR 'SUPERMAN' FILM



Batman may have finally defeated Superman.

Or at least the disappointing performance of 1997's "Batman and Robin" film may have contributed to the potential shelving of the Nicolas Cage "Superman" film.

While Warner Bros. spokesmen insist "the script just isn't ready to go," some industry sources feel that the project has been permanently tanked. The Tim Burton-directed project was already scheduled to begin shooting as promised by Cage and company back in April.

"I think there's a certain amount of trepidation about comic book movies in general right now," Cage said bluntly. "These hype machines–the expensive blockbusters–are starting to wear down audiences in general. It's making studios much more cautious. There's a much more careful eye on all of this. And that's part of what happened to 'Superman.'"

But the problems went deeper than just a spiraling budget.

"I wasn't really the type," Cage admitted. "I'm not your classic concept of what Superman should look like. I'm more Everyman, which is interesting to me. If Everyman is Superman, then that means that we're all Superman–I like that theme so much. But the main problem was that the script came in very, very expensively."

NOT SO SUPER Cage believes "I wasn't really the type" to play Superman.

"Chasing Amy" director/*Daredevil* writer Kevin Smith wrote an early version of the script which was eventually scrapped by Burton and producer Jon Peters. Wesley Strick ("The Saint") and Akiva Goldsman ("Lost in Space") have also had a hand in scripting the movie, which was scheduled to be based on the plot of DC Comics' 1992 "The Death of Superman" comic storyline.

In the meantime, Cage has moved on. He'll star next in Martin Scorsese's "Bringing Out the Dead," and doesn't know if he'll ever actually don the blue suit and cape.

"I've been very accommodating to 'Superman,' and I've taken a lot of heat in the press on it," Cage said. "I'll remain loyal to it, because I think it's a tremendous challenge, and it's exciting. But I've moved on to other things." ■ **JP**

'DARK' DAYS AHEAD FOR ANIMATION

Animation is ready to enter the Dark Age. The Dark Horse Age, that is.

Dark Horse Entertainment, Dark Horse Comics' film division, has three new projects in the pipeline set to debut on television sets as early as next fall.

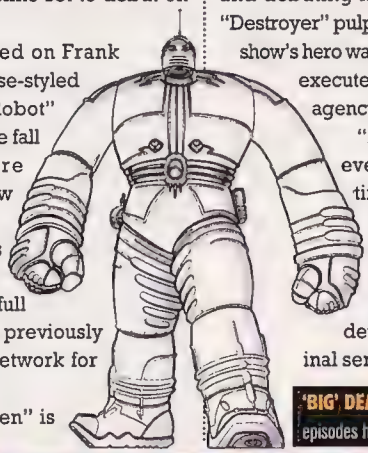
First up is an animated series based on Frank Miller and Geof Darrow's popular Japanese-styled comic "The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot" at Sony Pictures. Scheduled to debut in the fall of 1999, both Miller and Darrow are involved with the project, with Darrow contributing art design.

"The series' look will follow Geof's style from the comic," Scott Faye, vice-president of production for DHE said. A full season's worth of 26 episodes, not 13 as previously reported, has been commissioned. A network for the series hasn't been named just yet.

Art Adams' "Monkeyman and O'Brien" is also in development but it's uncertain as to which format you'll eventually see the highly intelligent space ape and his human pal Ann O'Brien in. Where the series will air and its format—either animated series or a live-action movie or both—are still being considered.

And finally, "The Destroyer" is a one-hour live-action series in development at Columbia/Tri-Star television, also network-less and debuting next fall. Based upon the popular series of "Destroyer" pulp adventure books created back in the '70s, the show's hero was a policeman framed for murder and seemingly executed, only to be rescued by a secret government agency that trained him to be its operative.

"He's the anti-James Bond," Faye said of the everyday hero, who'd take a beer over a martini any day. Astute readers may remember a movie from the '80s called "Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins" which was also based on the books. Faye is quick to distance the new series from the movie, citing, "We're developing this more as an homage to the original series of novels, complete with the great all-out action the books are known for." ■ PATRICK SAURIOL



'BIG' DEAL More "Big Guy" episodes have been ordered.

FAST FORWARD

TITLE	RELEASE DATE	KEY PLAYERS	THE SCOOP
"A BUG'S LIFE"	November 20	Voices by David Foley, Kevin Spacey, Julia Louis-Dreyfus	Disney's second computer-generated imagery (CGI) outing ("Toy Story" being its first) is about a group of ants being terrorized by hungry grasshoppers. To combat the menace, one lone ant recruits a group of flea circus performers to defend his ant colony.
"ANTZ"	October 2	Voices by Woody Allen, Sharon Stone, Gene Hackman	DreamWorks also has its own CGI feature about a neurotic ant that can't cope with being just like every other ant in his colony. Originally scheduled for March '99, DreamWorks pushed ahead its film so it'd open seven weeks ahead of Disney's "A Bug's Life." Let the insect wars begin!
"ASH"	Possibly 2001 or even 2002	Katsuhiro Otomo (director); Ed Khmara (screenwriter)	Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti's superheroic firefighter is in development at DreamWorks, with the same person who directed "Akira" handling this baby.
"ATLANTIS"	Sometime after 2000	Mike Mignola (*Hellboy*) and Richard Delgado (*Age of Reptiles*) conceptual design work	A group of adventurers have embarked on a quest to discover the lost continent. The art style is said to be reminiscent of the Victorian age of science fiction (*á la* Jules Verne), and actress Claudia Christian ("Babylon 5") will voice one of the characters.
"BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD 2"	May 28, 1999	Mike Judge (creator and some voices)	Paramount is anxious to get production of this sequel underway in time for a late May release. The only problem with that is something called "Star Wars, Episode One." That sucks, man.
"BLAST"	Possibly summer 2000	Joe Madureira, Jeph Loeb (creators)	A young boy discovers that he's really an ultra-powerful android and his mom is a secret agent. The screenplay is being finalized before any decisions are made as to whether it becomes a live-action or animated feature.
"SOUTH PARK, THE MOVIE"	Spring 1999	Creators Matt Parker and Trey Stone are involved in every aspect.	Parker and Stone have already said the Paramount Films feature will definitely be R-rated and be more...uh...adult than the Comedy Central series allows them to be. Word has it that the movie may be about the kids' parents moving out of South Park!
"TARZAN"	Spring or summer 1999	Voices by Tony Goldwyn, Minnie Driver, Rosie O'Donnell	Next up for Disney is an animated version of the classic Edgar Rice Burroughs character which focuses on Tarzan being discovered by a British expedition and deciding whether to leave his ape family. Ex-Genesis singer Phil Collins is writing the songs.
"TOY STORY 2"	Around Christmas 1999	Voices by Tom Hanks, Tim Allen	While Andy is away at summer camp, Woody is stolen by a toy collector named Al and it's up to Buzz and the gang to rescue him. Word on the street is you'll see Emperor Zurg (Buzz's galactic enemy), Woody's horse Bullseye and the other toys from Woody's 1952 playset. ■ PS

TRAILERS...

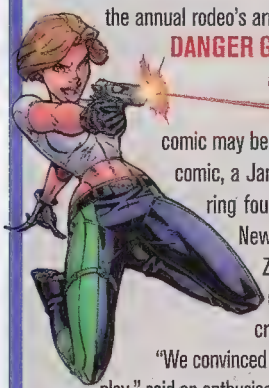
LIGHTS, CAMERA... ACTION?

X-MEN ON TRACK: The "X-Men" live-action movie, being produced by 20th Century Fox, remains on track for a production start according to director Bryan Singer. Filming will likely begin late this year.

Singer said it's unlikely "X-Men" could be ready by its originally hoped-for release date of Christmas 1999, but the film now looks like a summer 2000 release. Unlike recent big-budget, comic book films such as "Hulk" or "Superman Lives," "X-Men" doesn't appear to be in trouble of collapsing or major downscaling. "This is a positive situation," Singer said. "The studio makes that clear every day."

A production office for "X-Men" has been established at Fox, and screenwriter Ed Solomon ("Men in Black") is out, while Chris McQuarrie ("Usual Suspects") is in.

NEW SOUTH PARK: Sweet! Six new episodes of Comedy Central's runaway hit "South Park" began in mid-August. Episodes in the new batch include an independent film festival coming to town, poor Kenny coming down with the chicken pox, the gang building rival clubhouses, a class trip with Mr. Garrison to a new planetarium, spontaneous combustion of South Park residents and the annual rodeo's arrival.



DANGER GIRL LIVE: There's dangerous curves ahead as J. Scott Campbell and Andy Hartnell's super-hot *Danger Girl* comic may be headed to the big screen. The Image comic, a James Bond-like action/adventure starring four sexy babes, has been optioned by New Line Cinema, with Mojo Films and Zide-Perry Films producing. Creators Campbell and Hartnell will get first crack at the screenplay.

"We convinced them to give us a crack at the screenplay," said an enthusiastic Campbell. "That's the most exciting element. Andy and I give a shot of giving our interpretation of what we'd like to see on the screen. And though it's a longshot, at the very least, we'll give them an idea of what we want it to be. And the most influence you can get in the door, the best."

DARKER SPAWN SEQUEL: Terry Fitzgerald of Todd McFarlane Productions said he and Todd McFarlane have pitched a "Spawn" movie sequel idea to New Line Cinema. "They loved it," Fitzgerald said. "The story is a lot more urban, dark, gothic, with more of a 'Seven'-type feel to it. Expect a more edgy flick with a definite 'R' rating."

SHORT TAKES: "The Crow: Stairway to Heaven" live-action series is scheduled to begin in syndication the week of Sept. 21. The series is filming in Vancouver....MTV has ordered 22 new episodes of "Celebrity Deathmatch."... Derwin Jordan is taking over the role of Raleigh on "Nightman," while Jane Heitmeyer joins the cast as Lt. Briany Branca....Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment will produce a third feature in the "Jurassic Park" series. Steven Spielberg will produce the third, but not direct. ■ **ROB ALLSTETTER AND JOHN B. LACEY**

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BASIC TRAINING

DARRYL BANKS SHOWS YOU

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR

HOW TO CREATE SUPERHERO COSTUMES

PHOTO COURTESY DARRYL BANKS

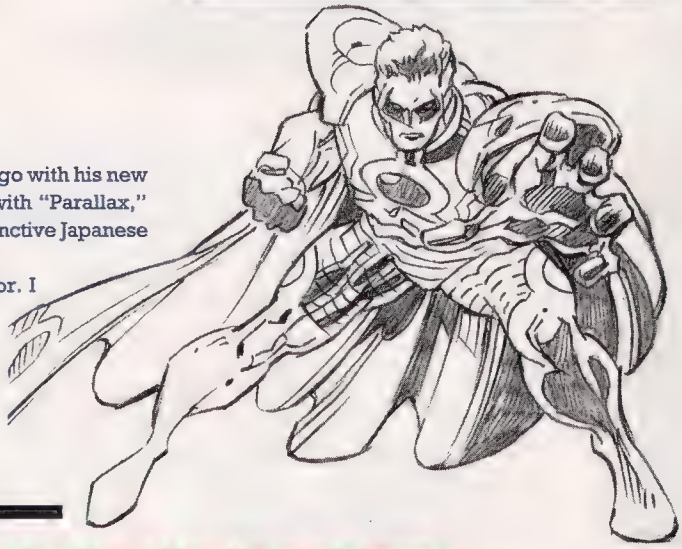
Welcome, everyone! It's time to go to school. Design school, that is. In my five years of illustrating with DC Comics, I've had the pleasure of designing many costumes and characters that you may know. I've done everything from such new character designs as Green Lantern's enemies Fatality and Grayven, to redesigns like Black Manta, Dr. Light, Parallax and some guy named Green Lantern. Now I want to share some wisdom with you, so you can create with the best of them.

Keep in mind that it's very important for an artist to be proficient in drawing human anatomy and clothing from real life. You should consider the function of the outfit and, of course, the coolness factor. Now, let's get creative...

A Natural Approach

There are a number of different places you can get your ideas from. TV. Sports. Movies. You name it. Nature happens to be a great one, too. When DC asked me to redesign Aquaman's foe Black Manta, I found a whole bunch of books about sea life at the library. I thought the old Black Manta looked about as intimidating as toothpaste, so I chose a much more bestial design.

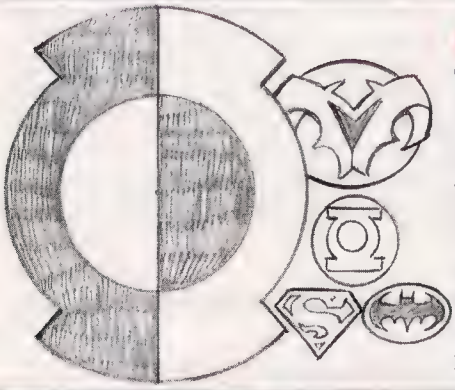
Some mantas have tail stingers, so of course my new Black Manta had to have one. And to make him even nastier, I gave him extendible stingers on his forearms. The devil fish incarnate, Black Manta is big, black and dangerous. At the same time, he retains the smooth texture and fluidity seen in his animal counterparts.



Ready, Set, Research

Former GL Hal Jordan needed a new name and look to go with his new attitude. This time, I used the dictionary to come up with "Parallax," and combined elements of medieval knights with a distinctive Japanese manga flair.

With his power increase, I chose to give Hal armor. I noticed that the Arthurian Knights-type of armor looked noble and durable with its layers of segmented plating and ornate designs. As a fan of Japanese anime, I've seen many armored men who looked well protected without being too bulky. Anime armor tends to have flared shoulders, which I really love, so I gave Parallax a similar treatment.



Symbolically Speaking

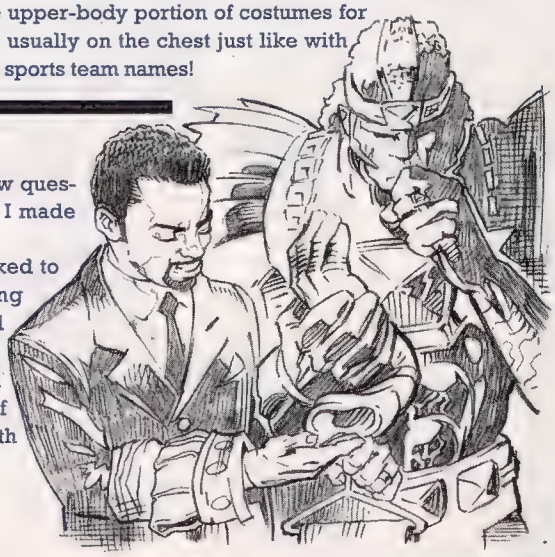
The logo is a major factor in costume design. Think about how recognizable the Superman "S" and the Batman bat symbol are. I designed Green Lantern's current emblem to be a modern-day tribute to the old one. Fatality's symbol is actually mirror images of a stylized letter "F." In other words, symbols should be simple, while making a bold statement about the character.

Not every character needs an emblem—look at the Silver Surfer or Hulk. But if you want to give your character one, be aware that logos tend to be found on the upper-body portion of costumes for the best visibility, usually on the chest just like with police badges and sports team names!

Tailor Made

It's good to look at your design sketches and ask yourself a few questions. "How appropriate is this design for my character? Have I made this character distinctive enough?"

When I gave Darkseid's son Grayven his appearance, I looked to ancient Greek and Roman sculpture to fit his hard, menacing demeanor. In ancient Greek sculpture, I saw decorative, repeated patterns on statue bases and columns. Greek men of myth such as those in the Olympian pantheon had head bands that denoted rank and importance. And since I view Darkseid as a type of monarch, it seems only natural that his son would be a prince with a costume reflecting the dark side of Olympus.



Face Facts

Let's take a moment to focus on masks. In the case of GL Kyle Rayner (left), I chose to give his mask a more angular and plated look to coincide with the light-armor feel of his body suit. The idea is to imply facial protection for Kyle, whereas Hal's mask (designed by Gil Kane) focuses on concealing his identity.

Masks or helmets may cover some, most or all of a character's head. Basically, decide what's most appropriate for the character. Think about the differences and similarities between Spider-Man, Flash, Iron Man, Cyclops and Nightwing. Each of them wears masks of varying degrees of function and purpose. Personally, I like masks that allow me to vary the character's facial expressions, which is really tough with a mask like Spidey's.

Heavy Duty

Want to give your design a large and hulking appearance? Besides bulking them up, try emphasizing the shoulders and feet. I love to give costumes an armored feel in general, but it's not a requirement for creating super-heavyweight characters. I've always considered the Juggernaut to be one of the greatest "big men" in comic design because of the bold simplicity of his armor, while also emphasizing his massive arms. When you make a costume for a big character, it's also good to emphasize the hands by way of wristbands or gauntlets. A big guy needs a big punch!

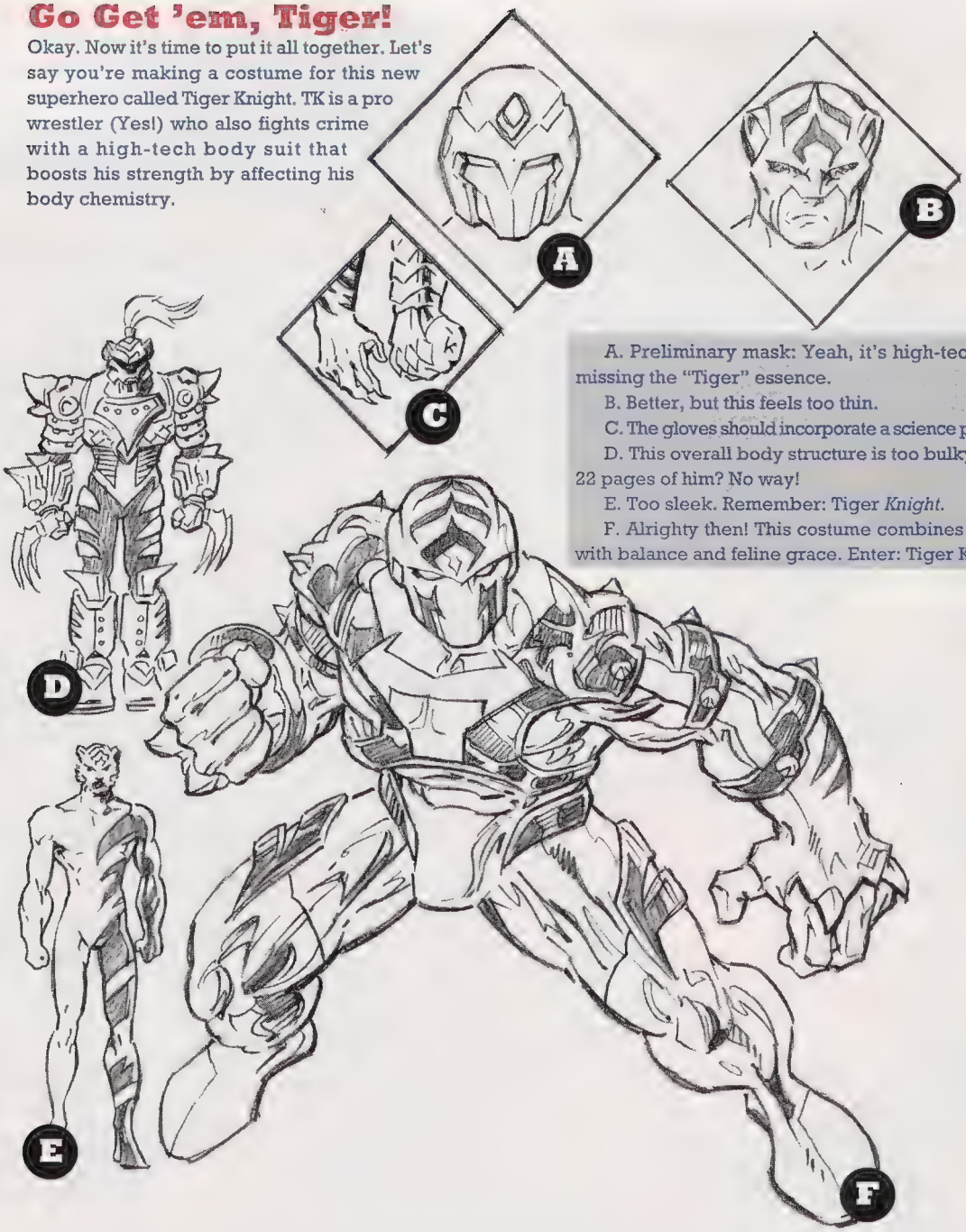
Victoria's Secret Weapon

How about female costumes? Guys, you can make attractive female suits without making the lady look like a Frederick's of Hollywood reject. Big hair, head gear and other upper body treatments can help add to that hourglass design flow. And as for skin, while Wonder Woman has a decent and noble bearing, she doesn't need a costume with a lot of coverage for protection because of her strength and mystic bracelets. The X-Men's Rogue has an awesome suit that covers her body from the neck down—not to protect her, but to protect others from her powers.

So, when creating a female costume, don't just go for a sexy look alone, but consider her powers and attitude.

Go Get 'em, Tiger!

Okay. Now it's time to put it all together. Let's say you're making a costume for this new superhero called Tiger Knight. TK is a pro wrestler (Yes!) who also fights crime with a high-tech body suit that boosts his strength by affecting his body chemistry.



A. Preliminary mask: Yeah, it's high-tech looking, but missing the "Tiger" essence.

B. Better, but this feels too thin.

C. The gloves should incorporate a science plus nature idea.

D. This overall body structure is too bulky and detailed. 22 pages of him? No way!

E. Too sleek. Remember: Tiger *Knight*.

F. Alrighty then! This costume combines the armor feel with balance and feline grace. Enter: Tiger Knight!

In this final version (F), I've given TK the sleek, yet armored, design I tend to favor. Although I usually like masks that expose some of the face, in this case I preferred a light helmet (knight reference) that incorporates graphic tiger-stripe motifs. His emblem is a stylized "T" on his chest that leads the viewer's eyes to his powerful arms. His suit has tiger-stripe plating and spikes that reflect the fangs and talons of a real tiger. His gloves are simple and function in ways you probably imagine they would. I kept the legs and feet more simple than the upper portions to keep the overall design uncluttered. And that's it.

So remember, my dear disciples, think through your sketches and be bold! Practice, do your research and brush after every meal. Don't give up if you don't like your designs, and always remember to have fun with drawing. Who knows, you may even become the Tommy Hilfiger of comics. Love ya.

To see Darryl Banks dress up your favorite superheroes, check out his work in DC Comics' Green Lantern.

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WIZARD #1/2 OFFER

This is the story every *Tenth* fan has demanded! On their way out of the demolished Springdale and on the road to Chicago, Espy, the Tenth and Zorina find themselves stranded in Kansas. In search of a way to transport the ailing Tenth, they convince a police officer and his canine unit to help them. With the Tenth in the back of the unit, they are descended upon by a dark cloud and black rain. But this is no ordinary rain, it's Rhazes Darkks' evil army of darkness and it hungers for the souls of those who destroyed its master!

Fans of great comics are not gonna want to miss this exclusive tale, and for *Tenth* completists this is a must-have! So get that $3 ready, fill out the order form and shoot your way on over to your local post office to mail it in.

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- A look into the sketchbook of Tony Daniel! Get a look at the preliminary drawings of two brand-new characters set to appear soon!
- And the most magical morsel of all—this is a Tenth story you won't find anywhere else! This exclusive comic is available through this one-time *Wizard* offer only! That's it!

Order your copy now, before the army of darkness comes knocking on your door!

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THIS OFFER EXPIRES NOVEMBER 20, 1998

Drawing Board

Who needs the pros? This is the show for WIZARD READERS' ART

To win *Wizard* #80's "Everybody Smoosh Now" contest, Mr. Grand-Prize Winner had ta get creative and amalgamize two Image characters into a brand-new, funky-cool creation. And our winner will see his imagination come to life in *Altered Image* #2 with praise and credit for his new Image addition in that issue. The grand-prize winner also gets to keep the original piece of artwork that his character appears on, an Image "I" cloisonné and oh, we can't forget that he'll also win a set of *Altered Image* #1-3 signed by series artist/writer Jim Valentino. Honorable mentions will see their characters tucked away in the pages of *Altered Image* and also get a set of *Altered Image* #1-3 signed by Valentino. Thanks for entering and see ya next month!

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

ONE MIGHTY MOTHER

KEVIN METZ, Springfield, Mo.

THIS ONE CAUGHT OUR EYE

THE BOOTY

DARKBLADE
ANDY Q. BUI, Annan Dale, Va.

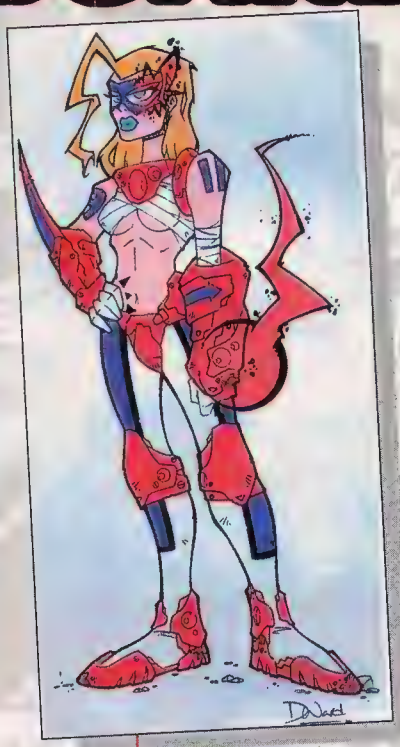
RIPVOID
SHAUN MICHAEL MARTENS, Coaldale, Canada

WILDGUARD
KENNY CAMACHO, Yauco, Puerto Rico

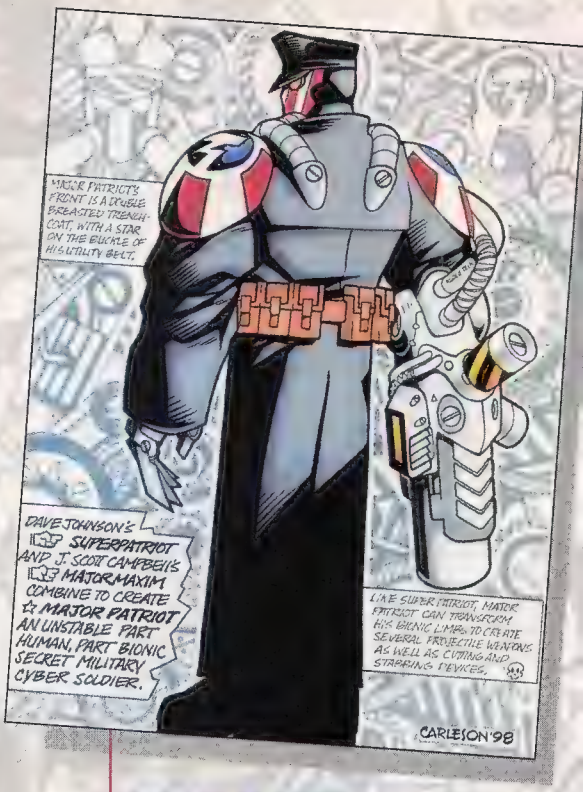
VOODOO CHYLDE
OWEN F. BUENAVENTURA, San Francisco, Calif.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Drawing BOARD



SPARTESS
DARREL WARD, Orleans, Ontario



MAJOR PATRIOT
DAVE CARLESON, Moscow, Idaho

SHEMP
JAMES LAPANTE, Enola, Pa.

Want your art to appear on one of these three pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your "Drawing Board" entries to:

SUBMIT!

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. **You must also include two color photos of yourself** (no Polaroids, please). All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Entertainment. Employees of Wizard Entertainment are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? All right, good luck!

THIS MAN IS SCARED AND HE HAS GOOD REASON TO BE

すごい

STONE #2

image

PORTACIO • HABERLIN • ALANGUILAN

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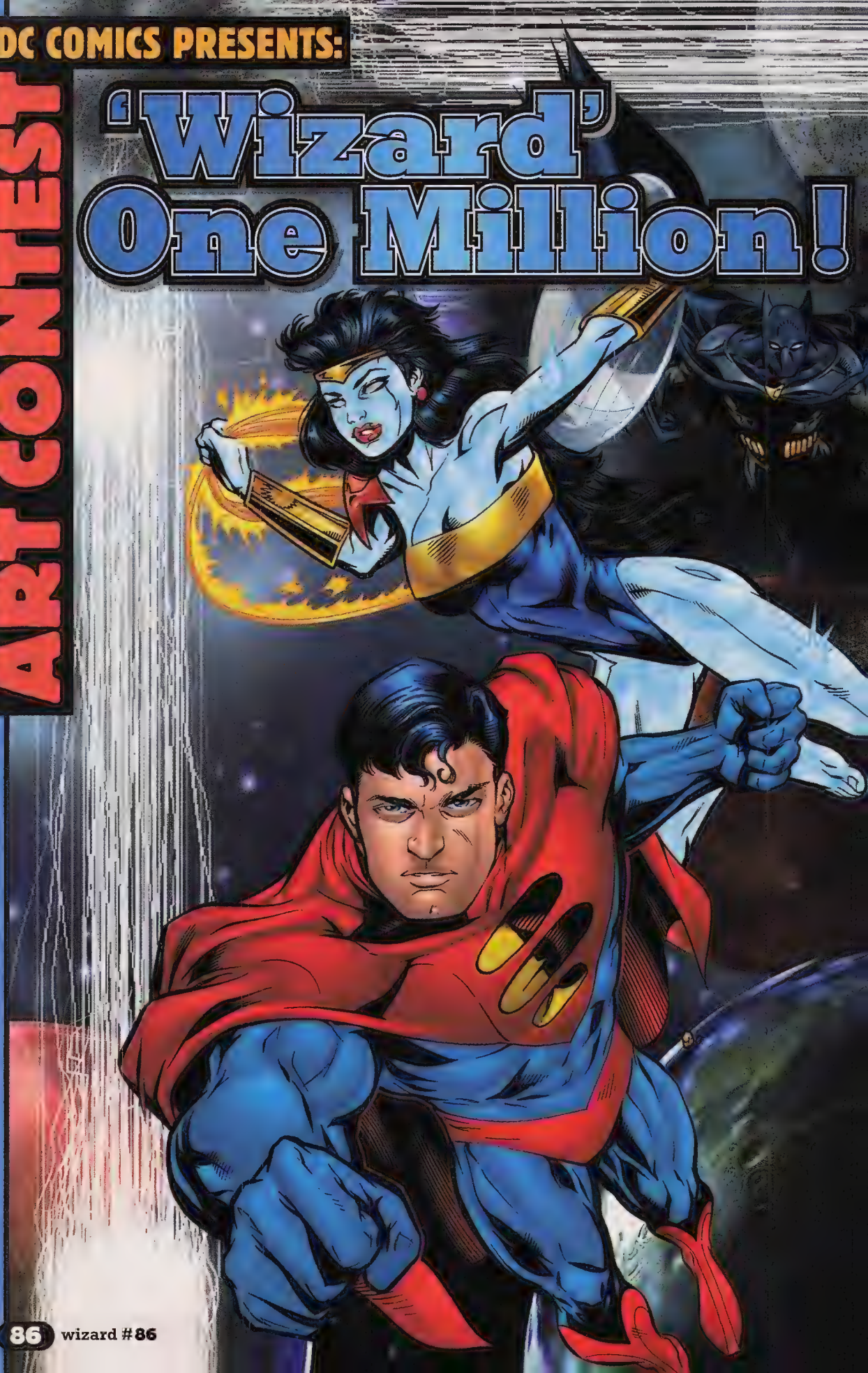
WWW.WHILCE.COM

DC COMICS PRESENTS:

ART CONTEST

'Wizard' One Million!



PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1): One future fan-favorite artist wins an original page of art from the *DC One Million* mini-series, the entire *DC One Million* four-issue mini-series signed by writer Grant Morrison and artist Val Semeiks, plus every tie-in issue of *DC One Million*, which is nearly every book in the DC Universe. But that's not all! The winner also gets the super-cool Superman '98 watch, a Legion ring and a *DC One Million* T-shirt!

FIRST PRIZE (2): Two future world leaders each win the entire *DC One Million* four issue mini-series signed by writer Grant Morrison and artist Val Semeiks, plus every tie-in issue of *DC One Million*, a Legion ring and a *DC One Million* T-shirt.

SECOND PRIZE (5): Five future hall of famers each win the entire *DC One Million* four-issue mini-series signed by writer Grant Morrison and artist Val Semeiks, plus every tie-in issue of *DC One Million* and a *DC One Million* T-shirt.

FOR ONE MONTH, THE DC UNIVERSE IS BEING THRUST INTO ITS FUTURE, to issue #1,000,000. Not wanting to be left out, we want a #1,000,000 issue as well. Okay, maybe just a cover. What we want you to do is use your favorite futuristic DC characters to draw the cover to *Wizard* #1,000,000. The characters don't have to be ones that exist in the future, like the Legion, but can be future versions of any character or characters you choose.

When you're done creating the future, fill out the entry form below, attach it to the back of your drawing and send it in. Also, be sure to include two photos of yourself with the entry. Each photo (no Polaroids, please) should include your full name, date of birth, telephone number and address on the back. The most creative artists get the prizes and get featured in the pages of this here magazine. Just remember: Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard and can be in any medium (oils, crayon, marker, etc.). Neon inks will not print. Artwork must not be larger than 8"x 11 1/4". Do not fold, bend or roll artwork. Mail flat.

PRIZES FOR THIS CONTEST ARE PROVIDED BY DC COMICS AND VAL SEMEIKS, TIME TRAVELERS OF THE NOBLEST KIND!

THE LAW OF PHYSICS

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, DC Comics, their immediate families and continuity sticklers. This storyline is gonna drive you nuts. Better get the rubber room ready! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and e-mail address on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry along with your photos. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "*Wizard* One Million!" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Better pay those taxes now. They're only gonna go up in the future. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by October 30, 1998.** Wizard Entertainment is a really cool place to work and is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than December 4, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about November 13, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after November 13, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "*Wizard* One Million!" Art Contest Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, attach your entry and photos and put it all in an envelope. Send it to:
"Wizard One Million!" Art Contest,
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

"Wizard One Million!" Art Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE OCTOBER 30, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

DID YOU ATTACH YOUR ENTRY AND PHOTOS?

BACK TO THE SPAWNING GROUNDS

Spawny-guy's back in town! Taking a break from the alternate universes of Manga Spawn and Dark Ages Spawn, Spawn Series 12 marks a return to more familiar comic book territory for McFarlane Toys. This upcoming line, set to hit stores in October, includes figures straight off the printed page such as **Spawn IV** (inspired by Spawn's appearance in his comic books in recent months), the living garbage pile the **Heap** and *Spawn* penciler Greg Capullo's creator-owned **Creech**, as well as brand-new creations like **Reanimated Spawn**, **Bottom Line** and **Top Gun**. And if that wasn't enough, the line is accompanied by a deluxe boxed version of everybody's favorite giant gorilla, **Cy-Gor**. Woo hoo! This time around (Cy-Gor made the cut two years ago in Spawn Series 4), the big ape stands 8 inches tall and features a pop-open chest cavity with a li'l robotic monkey sidekick. Neat!

The figures shown here, like typical McFarlane releases, are decked out with all sorts of accessories and play features. The Heap features a hinged lower jaw so you can pile garbage in his mouth and make him puke it back up. The Creech is a hulking mass of a figure and has a bunch o' bendy tentacles and snap-on weapons. And what about Spawn? Well, he comes with guns, guns and more guns.

GOIN' APE Cy-Gor (right) makes his second appearance, while Spawn jumps out of his recent comics to the toy shelf.

BLOCKS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI; SPAWN PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

BY TOM PALMER JR.

ALPHA FLIGHT SET TO SOAR SOON

These toys are cool, eh? Put down that Molson and check out the next two figures in Toy Biz's upcoming Alpha Flight action figure assortment: **Northstar** and **Aurora**! These two wonder twins join Sasquatch (shown in *Wizard* #84) and a Snowbird and Puck two-pack in this line that's set to hit toy stores in early 1999. Both figures will be sold together in a two-pack and are sculpted so they can hold hands, mimicking the way the pair used to activate their big flashy light power back in all them old *Alpha Flight* funnybooks.

CANADIAN BACON Start your breakfast and your new year right: Alpha Flight two-packs.

FRAZETTA IN 3-D

The name Frank Frazetta is synonymous the world over with powerful warriors and half-nekkid fantasy chicks. And now that name will take on new meaning for toy fans as Warner Bros. Toys unveils its line of action figures based on paintings by the renowned fantasy artist.

These detailed 6-inch figures are sculpted by Steve Kiwus and each are posed to mimic the Frazetta painting they were based on. In addition, each figure will be packaged in a wide blister bubble that will allow buyers to view the figure from almost every angle. The names of the figures are still tentative, but the first four releases will be based on unforgettable Frazetta masterpieces like "The Huns," "Death Dealer 2" "Berserker" and "A Princess From Mars." Look for the Frazetta line on comic store shelves just in time for Christmas.

DEALING DEATH From left: prototypes of Death Dealer 2, Berserker and The Hun.

FRAZETTA PHOTOS COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. TOYS. ALPHA FLIGHT PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRADER.

YEP, MORE STAR WARS

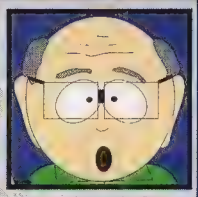
Kenner's just about ready to wrap up its Star Wars: Expanded Universe action figure offerings this fall with **Leia Organa Solo** (from the *Dark Empire* comic series), **Mara Jade** (from the "Heir to the Empire" novels) and the **Darktrooper** (from the LucasArts *Dark Forces* video game). Get 'em while they're hot, kiddies!

In other Star Wars news, another batch of figures, dubbed the Classic Edition, has been announced for the end of the year. This set will feature updated versions of familiar Star Wars trilogy characters in order to get fans primed and ready for the first Star Wars prequel, set to hit theaters on Memorial Day 1999. The first four Classic Edition figures include **Luke Skywalker** with floppy hat, binoculars, rifle and articulated elbows; **Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi** with hood up; **Yoda** with real hair, cane and boiling pot; and **Darth Vader** with double cape over one shoulder.

SEEING STARS Leia Organa Solo (right), Darktrooper (left) and Mara Jade (bottom left) expand into toy shelves everywhere.

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE



1) **SOUTH PARK** Dammit! America *needs* South Park toys! A perfect toy line would have to include everyone from Cartman right down to Mr. Hankey.

2) **BATTLE CHASERS** Kids love them Battle Chasers. They love 'em so much, in fact, that a Chasers toy line would be an instant hit. A hulking huge Calibretto figure and a hulking huge Red Monika figure would put this line over the top.

3) **CIGARETTE SMOKING MAN** X-Files movie toys are flying off the shelves, but where the heck is Mulder's arch-nemesis? The Cigarette Smoking Man figure would come with, what else, a tiny pack o' smokes. (Fake, of course.)

4) **DANGER GIRL** An Abbey Chase figure could beat the crap outta all yer James Bond toys. Give her and her Danger Girl pals all sorts of nifty-cool spy accessories like guns, knives and whips.

5) **THUNDERBOLTS** You know the drill: they used to be some of the Marvel Universe's baddest baddies, but now they're heroes on the run. All Toy Biz needs to do for this toy line is offer each 'Bolt with his bad alter-ego.

6) **JADE** Hubba hubba! There's nothing like a sexy green action figure to brighten up any fanboy's day, especially if she came with funky snap-on emerald energy blasts.

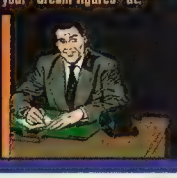
7) **GURI** Your Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire collection won't be complete without the beautiful, but deadly Guri, complete with multi-jointed, karate-choppin' action.

8) **FATHOM** Michael Turner's eagerly-awaited new series is ripe with action figure potential. The Aspen figure would be sculpted with translucent watery-blue parts to simulate her special powers. Add replica tropical fish, coral and eels for that extra-special touch.

9) **ORION** Orion's set to headline his own comic series, so now's the perfect time to bring Darkseid's son to toy store aisles. Throw in a motorized Astro-Harness and this figure would rock!

10) **LOIS LANE** No matter how you slice it, Superman ain't complete without his little portion of love pudding, Lois Lane. A Lois figure would naturally come with a mail-in offer for a Jimmy Olsen figure.

Hey! Keep sending in your requests! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:



TOY WISH LIST
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

SOUTH PARK PHOTO COURTESY OF COMEDY CENTRAL. STAR WARS PHOTO BY PAUL SCIPRALDI. MARVEL TOY PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOY BIZ.

TOY BIZ GOES EXCLUSIVE

Toy Biz is offering a slew of exclusive action figure multi-packs this summer and fall, but you might have to do a bit of creative shopping to get all your Marvel favorites!

Bop on down to your local Target store to pick up two 8-inch Famous Covers twin-packs: **Mr. Fantastic** and the **Invisible Woman** surface in August, while Spider-Man and **Electro** charge onto shelves in October. Kay-Bee Toys also has a Famous Covers twin-pack on the way for August, with a black costume Spider-Man and **Spider-Woman** in her current black-and-white costume.

B.J.'s is the place to shop in August if you're looking for two special action figure eight-packs. The Spider-Man: Monster Mayhem set features the first-ever **J. Jonah Jameson** figure, as well as Spider-Man, Six-Armed Spider-Man, the Man-Spider, the Punisher, Kraven, the Lizard and Morbius, while the X-Men Strike Team set has exclusive **Professor Xavier** and **Super-Skrull** figures, as well as Wolverine, Forge, Banshee, Gambit, Storm and Jubilee in their blue-and-yellow team outfits.

MARVEL MANIA Mr. Fantastic & Invisible Woman (above), and Spidey & Electro are just a few of the exclusive figures on the way.

Sam's Club will offer two special three-packs this October, beginning with Spider-Man: Heroes Unite, which features Spidey and Iron Man teaming up against the mighty and all-powerful (yeah, right) **Spot**. Also on the way from Sam's is Spider-Man: Masters of Magic, with the Web-head, Astral Plane Doctor Strange and an exclusive **Dormammu** figure.

Finally, Toys R Us will offer two special sets, the American Heroes two-pack in August, with Captain America and the first-ever **Bucky** figure (Yay!), as well as the Spider-Man: Spider and the Crow five-pack in October. This special set has Spider-Man, Spider-Sense Spider-Man, Peter Parker, the Chameleon and an exclusive **Scarecrow** figure, which was originally part of the canceled Street Warriors line.

stuff

COMIC BOOK MERCHANDISE YOU CAN BUY...

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS RETAILER

Who among us doesn't like stuff? Whether it's Detective Chimp's fingerprint kit, Sunfire's tanning lotion or Molten Man's Lava Lamps, we're all suckers for comic-related merchandise. Each month, *Wizard* will strive to show you the latest and super-neatest in comic book statues, posters, pins, magnets, shirts and other goodies.

In short, if it's cool, and if it's stuff, you'll find it here.

DYNAMIC DUO Scully and Mulder sure look great standing on monster truck tires.

FIGURE IT OUT

The truth is out there...and we've found it: These figurines kick butt! Dark Horse soon will release the first officially licensed statuettes of Fox Mulder and Dana Scully. Based on the likenesses of actors David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, respectively, the duo were sculpted by Carl Surges. Each measures 12 inches tall and comes fully assembled and pre-painted for $99.95. Get 'em both for just under two C-notes.

A STORMY SCULPT

Bowen Designs presents the latest in a series of Marvel statuettes—Storm! Sculpted by Randy Bowen, the Storm mini-bust ($35) measures 5 1/2 inches tall and shows the X-woman from the waist up (sans arms, 'natch) on a base of clouds. Storm's limited to just 3,000 editions and will be available in October.

MINI MUTIE If you contribute generously to the "Give Storm Some Pupils" fund, we'll be eternally grateful.

IT'S A TRAP R2-D2 tells you what to do? Ah, what the hell.

TRIVIAL FORCE

Hasbro Games is giving Star Wars fans a heavy-duty dose of the Force with its *Trivial Pursuit Star Wars Classic Trilogy Collector's Edition* ($39.99). The game is an all-new version of the classic board game *Trivial Pursuit* and features questions on the mega-popular Star Wars movie trilogy. The game has more than 2,400 new Star Wars questions, a redesigned game board, four pewter character tokens (Darth Vader, Han Solo, Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia) and a little R2-D2 that tells players how many spaces to move. The game is available right now.

SHI'S A STATUE

This September, look for Crusade Entertainment's resin statue of Billy Tucci's comic book sensation, Shi ($195). The colorful 12-inch statue is limited to just 999 copies. Each statue comes signed and numbered by Tucci and sculptor Michael Mendez. For collectors who would rather paint the statue themselves, a limited-edition deluxe resin model kit ($99) of the same statue is also available.

SWINGING SWORDSWOMAN Resin has never looked so good as it does on Shi.

TOTING THE TICK BAG

Carry all your evil-fighting equipment around in the new Tick tote bag ($12.99) from New England Comics. This blue and orange vinyl bag is emblazoned with full-color "Tick" TV animation artwork. It comes with a shoulder strap, hand straps and zipper and has lots of interior room. Look for it this September.

BAGGED JUSTICE The Tick, his ally Arthur and villainous scum decorate the Tick tote bag.

HOT STUFF!!!!!!!!

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

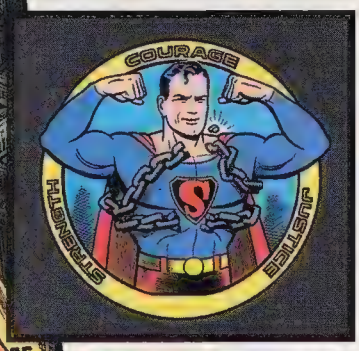
FOREVER AND A SUPERMAN

This October, DC Comics hopes to immortalize the Man of Steel with Superman Forever lenticular prints ($99) featuring art by Alex Ross. It's actually a series of four of Ross' Superman paintings that graced the cover of the hit comic *Superman Forever* (the collector's edition). Each full-color print is matted next to each other to show Clark Kent slowly becoming the Man of Steel. Limited to only 500 editions, the set measures 25 1/2" X 13" (each picture measures 4 1/2" X 6 3/4") and comes with a card signed by Ross.

NO BIRD, NO PLANE It's just Clark Kent changing into Superman as done by artist Alex Ross.

SUPERSTUFF

DC Comics and Kitchen Sink Press present *Superman: The Dailies 1939-1942* ($75). This hard cover with slipcase reprints the original Superman daily newspaper strip from the '40s. The 560-page volume includes the first three years of newspaper strips by Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster with an introduction by James Vance. To go with the book, check out the "Superman: The Man of Tomorrow" metal poster ($18) with art by Peter Poplaski. This 12" X 16" poster (with rolled edges and pre-drilled corner holes for hanging) shows Superman leaping over the Metropolis skyline in classic Shuster style. The metal poster comes shrink-wrapped on cardboard to prevent scuffing. Look for these classic Superman items in October.



MAN OF STUFF Heck, who needs to eat? It's Superman merchandise!

BONA FIDE SCRIPT

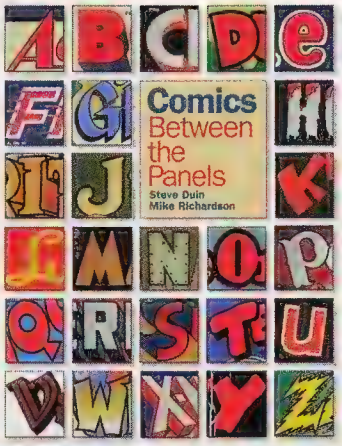
Cartoon Books brings comic fans the Fone Bone deluxe ball point pen ($34.95) in September. This high-quality ball point pen features a *cloisonné* figure of Fone Bone as the lapel clip with a high-glass black enamel barrel. You supply the pocket protector.

WRITE ON! Writing term papers will still be tedious work with the Fone Bone pen.

ENTER SANDMAN Alas, poor Yorick...Yorick? Hello?

SAND AND STATUE

To celebrate Morpheus' (a.k.a. Sandman's) birthday, DC Comics and Vertigo are releasing a Sandman 10th anniversary statue ($195). Designed by Kent Williams (*Moonshadow*, *Hellblazer*) and sculpted by William Paquet, this new Sandman statue shows Morpheus holding his jewel-eyed helm standing on a base (that features a 10th anniversary engraving) wrapped in golden vines under a thorny arch. The full-color, cold-cast porcelain statue stands more than 12 inches tall and will be available in stores November 25.



B IS FOR BOOK Got comics? Good. Then get this book.

READ BETWEEN THE PANELS

Comics Between the Panels ($49.95) is a new book by Steve Duin and Mike Richardson (publisher of Dark Horse Comics) that hits bookstores in September. This 504-page full-color hard cover takes a look at the comics medium from the 1930s to today; via alphabetical entries, the authors provide behind-the-scenes information on everything from Li'l Abner to Spawn.

HATS OFF TO DARK HORSE

Dark Horse Comics gives comic fans a great reason to have "hat head." It's called "Braingear" ($17.95 per hat), a collection of *chapeaus* with comic character designs. Look for brushed cotton baseball hats for both Rusty the Boy Robot and The Big Guy by Frank Miller and Geof Darrow. In addition, look for the Too Much Coffee Man cuffed knit hat with embroidered logo based on Shannon Wheeler's java junkie. These three hats will be available November 11 in specialty stores.

BUST A CAP Comic artists Frank Miller, Geof Darrow and Shannon Wheeler promote "hat head" in November.

TOON TUNES

Kid Rhino Records presents two new musical offerings ($16.98 each) guaranteed to satisfy the cartoon lover in everyone. First off, there's *Space Ghost's Surf & Turf*, a new CD (or cassette) of music and fun from the Cartoon Channel's "Cartoon Planet" show. There are 22 tracks of music, and Space Ghost, Zorak and Brak supply comical vignettes between each of the songs. Also available is "The Best of Anime," featuring songs from some of the most popular Japanese animated movies and TV shows. Among the 16 tracks on the CD are four English songs ("Astro Boy," "Gigantor," "Sailor Moon" and "Speed Racer") and 12 songs sung in Japanese. You can find these CDs or cassette (*Space Ghost* only—$10.98) in record stores everywhere this September, or order them from Rhino direct at (800) 432-0020.

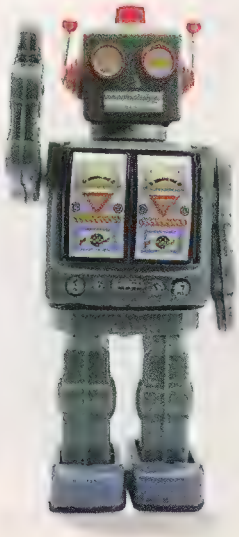
MERRY MELODIES Throw away those Barry Manilow albums and get your hands on Kid Rhino's new toon albums.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company putting out fun comic-related merchandise like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.? We'd like to preview 'em! Please send all info and sample products to:

Stuff c/o Wizard Ent.
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

There's a place where
thousands of people
with their very own toy stores
Would really like to meet you.



video STUFF

By Matthew Danish and Greg Orlando

We kicked open the doors at the big E3 video game show (May 27-30) in Atlanta and took everyone in the place hostage, demanding to see all the new, hot video games coming out for the Sony PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and personal computers. Funny thing, though, all we really had to do to get in was show our press credentials....

Here are some of the games we got our greedy hands on.

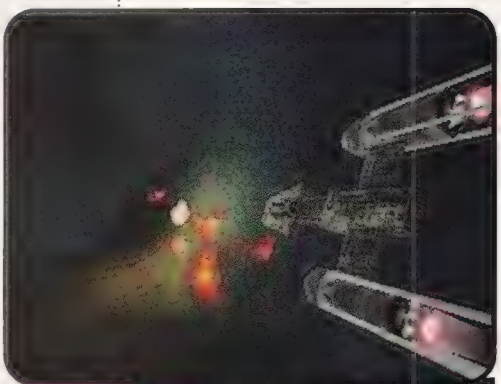
STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON

Players will need the Force in buckets this fall when they step into one of five Rebel spaceships (including the experimental V-Wing Fighter), take to the skies and blast the bejeezus out of the Empire's fighters, AT-AT walkers and other implements of death in LucasArts' *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron*. This single-player flight-simulator shoot-'em-up (available for both the Nintendo 64 and PC) lets users play rebel hero Luke Skywalker and fly more than 15 missions over a host of different landscapes. Computer-controlled wing mates accompany the player on each mission, informing the player of primary and secondary mission objectives, attacking targets and providing cover fire. In turn, the wing mates will need protection—once they're all gone, the user's going to have to fly the unfriendly skies alone.

TOMB RAIDER III: THE ADVENTURES OF LARA CROFT

Torture with thumbscrews and red-hot coals couldn't get Eidos to reveal the ultra-secret plot of *Tomb Raider III* (for the Sony PlayStation and PC), but an early demo of the game hinted at a super-hit in the making.

The game's heroine, Lara Croft, is beautifully rendered and comes with a host of new moves (like the speed dash) to help her through the game's four massive worlds. Gameplay takes place in such varied locations as London, the South Pacific, Antarctica and even an "Area 51"-type base in the Nevada desert. Eidos will release the game this winter and also promises Lara will have access to new weapons, vehicles and outfits.

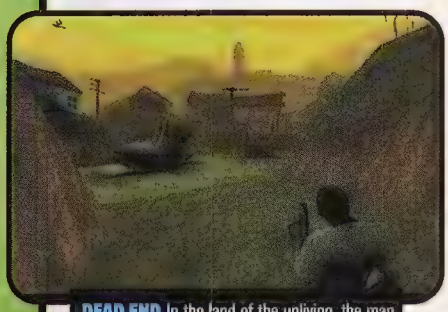


Y-NOT? Take flight in the slow but powerful Y-Wing fighter and make the portly pilot Porkins proud.

SHADOWMAN

Life or death? Supernatural hitman Mike LeRoi can do either, traveling between the land of the living and the land of the dead when he becomes the comic book hero Shadowman.

Users play the ambidextrous Shadowman, battling undead serial killers, demons and other mystical baddies in this *Tomb Raider*-esque 3-D, third-person action-adventure game. Spooky and oppressive, Acclaim's *Shadowman*, tentatively set for a January 1999 release, goes heavy on atmosphere, immersing players deep into a series of surreal environments filled with the oddest assortment of creatures around. Legless, two-headed zombies chase our hero, walking on their hands, and a snake with a skull's head and voodoo hat serves as Shadowman's guide through the land of the dead. *Shadowman* will see release soon on the Nintendo 64 and PCs.



DEAD END In the land of the unliving, the man with a pulse is king—and lunch, too.

PARASITE EVE

Square Soft's *Parasite Eve*, already available in Japan, was one of the best-looking games for the PlayStation shown at E3. With a beautiful female heroine, breathtaking visuals and a detailed storyline, the game combines

UP AHEAD

A bear, a bird and beheadings, killer rabbits get down, crystal dreams, mortal screams and more!!!

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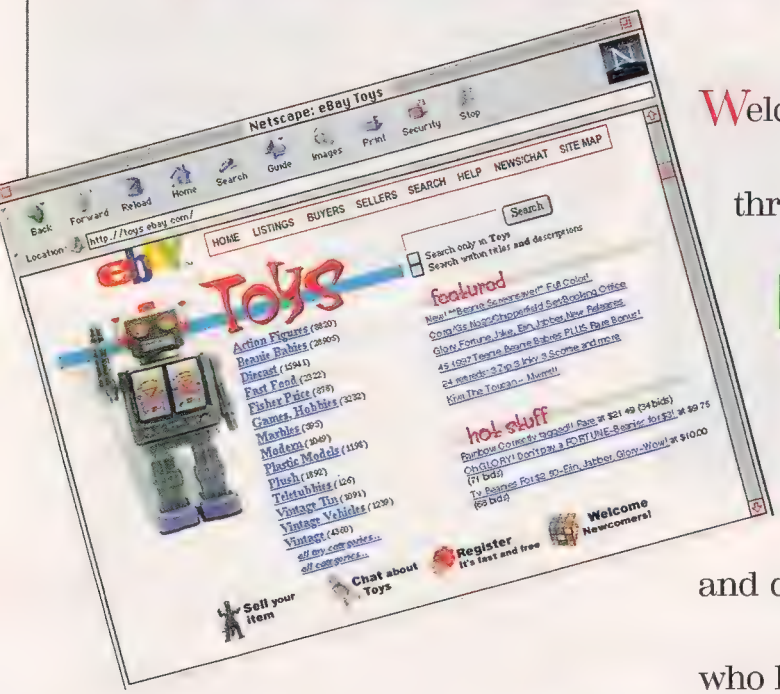

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stunning movie-like graphics with role-playing game strategy. While collecting treasures, magic spells and weapons, and relying on puzzle-solving skills, Eve stalks bad guys through the mean streets of New York City. Combat is turn-based as players must wait for the attack meter to charge before calling up and using weapons. Set for a late 1998 release, *Parasite Eve* perhaps does not rise to the level of the Final Fantasy series, but bad guys and enemy creatures are well-animated and the music soundtrack is solid.

STAR BLAZERS? It's a fighter plane, it's a robot, it's a half robot/half fighter. Veritech fighters are three, three, three ships in one.

ROBOTECH: CRYSTAL DREAMS

Gametek's sprawling, epic combat one-to-four player flight simulator for the Nintendo 64 puts users right into the middle of the Robotech cartoon and comic book universe.

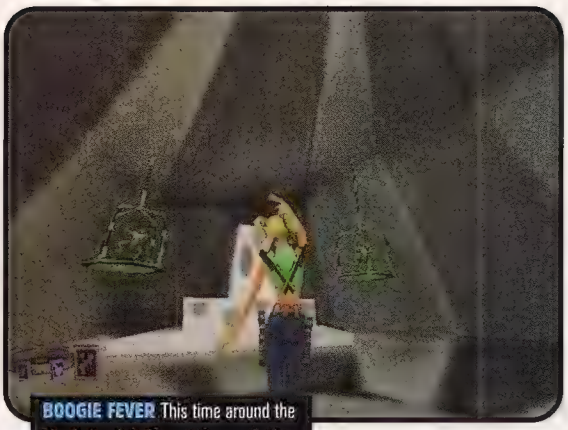
Users pilot a Veritech fighter for the Robotech Defense Forces, fighting against the evil, giant race the Zentraedi. The Veritechs, which can be customized by the user, can transform into three different configurations: a robot (Battleoid), a fighter and a half-fighter/half-robot hybrid called the Guardian.

The gameplay is non-linear, meaning that players will have total freedom to pick and choose their space battles. *Crystal Dreams* can support approximately 100 ships at one time; while a user pilots his craft, multiple shoot-outs will be flaring around him. And fans of the "Robotech" cartoon series will be glad to know that most of the show's major characters show up in one form or another. The game's release date has yet to be determined.

CARDINAL SYN

Cardinal Syn, a vicious, 3-D PlayStation fighting game by 989 Studios puts a new spin on an old genre. The game has users battling with medieval brutes, fighting on totally interactive backgrounds loaded with spikes, running lava, acid pools and other deathtraps. Players can also navigate their characters in any possible direction, allowing for greater defensive flexibility.

The fighting action is smooth and fast-paced. With well-timed hits players can divest their opponents of various limbs or even cut their heads off. The game also offers a good crop of magic power-ups, which will let a player heal himself or smite his enemies, as well as the wonderful opportunity to play as the hulking behemoth Mongoro, who can assault his enemies with a suffocating "flatulence attack." *Syn* should be in stores right now.



BOOGIE FEVER This time around the blonde bombshell's *not* the one in the suspended Go-Go cage.

SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE

White-trash waitress Allison Huxter's got a mad-on for evil, vivisectionist space bunnies who've kidnapped her sister. And who could blame her?

This fall, Allison must invade the bunnies' fortress in this *Blasto*-style, PC 3-D action-shooter by Ripcord Games. She's armed only with a stolen space bunny gun and a series of dance moves—yes, dance moves—to distract her hated enemies. When Allison is confronted by a horde of killer rabbits, she can mesmerize them with a series of spins and pirouettes—and while her foes are distracted, she can blast them into stew.

Beyond the standard running, jumping, shooting and puzzle solving, *Bunnies* offers up a decidedly wicked sense of humor. If Allison falls too far, her body will fold up like an accordion. She'll also, depending on the peril, lose her head or be crushed beneath huge boulders or other obstructions. And man, those experiments the bunnies are conducting? Well, just wait until you see some of the crazy (and dangerous) creatures they've cobbled together.

SKELETON CREW Kids, remember to get plenty of calcium and always take care of your skin. If not, it's the Grim Fandango for you.

GRIM FANDANGO

Ready for a trip to the lovely land of the dead? In *Grim Fandango*, LucasArts' newest foray into the PC adventure genre, gamers play the part of Manny Calavera, a wayward travel agent at the Department of Death, seeking to reclaim his lost job, and perhaps his soul.

Not Recommended for the Faint of Heart

All medieval warriors; hoist your weapons, prepare your souls! A dark and intriguing plot has surfaced riddled with clans of evil warriors, dangerous weapons and devastating fatalities as intense as they are gory.

Cardinal Syn replaces the typical battle arena with impressive interactive environments, all within an evolving 3D world. Nontraditional, 3D arenas challenge you with interactive elements, allowing you to trap, corner or dispose of your opponents. Gain the upper hand by maneuvering around interactive lava streams, spike-lined walls and sizzling acid pools, or use them to smite and distroy your enemies.

Enter the Cardinal Syn™ Sweepstakes

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Send a postcard (no envelopes please) with your name, age, address, and phone number by 10/25/98. You can win a trip to the 1999 Wizard World Chicago, a PlayStation® game console or copies of Cardinal Syn; the ultimate real-time 3D fighting videogame.

(see rules below)

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Sporting a familiar and intuitive point-and-click interface, *Grim Fandango* takes place in a world populated not by humans, but by cartoony skeletons who, while lacking in facial expression, all possess unique personalities. Packed with a casket-load of black humor, the requisite puzzles to solve and all the elements of a great 1930s detective movie, gaming fans will no doubt be swept up by *Grim Fandango* this fall.

THIS MEANS WAR! Give peace a chance, and then get with the program and blow stuff up like it's your daytime job.

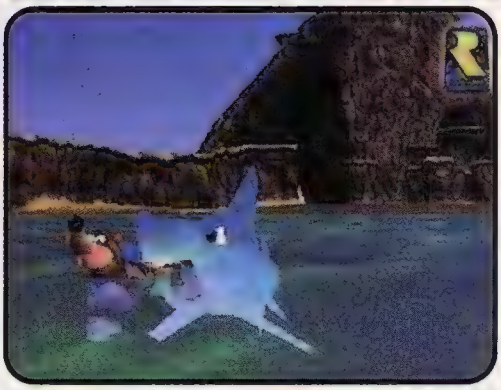
WARGAMES DEFCON I

MGM Interactive's *Wargames Defcon I* for the Sony PlayStation should be a solid addition to any PlayStation video gamer's library. In the game (based on the film "Wargames"), players control an array of tanks and jeeps armed with machine guns and cannons which are maneuvered against fortified enemy buildings and soldiers *a la Command and Conquer*. Gameplay occurs in stages and each stage features a particular geographic map to be defended against the invaders. While the tank play is fairly standard third-person and reminiscent of older style games, the Sony controller allows players to switch back and forth between the tanks or jeeps they're controlling to flank the enemy in coordinated maneuvers. Players can also change the viewpoint in the middle of tank battles from a narrow to a much broader aerial view. *Defcon I* will be out this winter.

FIRETEAM

Tired of the standard multi-player, first-person shooters that require little more than a fast trigger finger? Then keep an eye peeled for Multidue's *FireTeam* (available now). It's a unique PC-via-Internet multi-player game in which victory hinges so greatly upon teamwork and cooperation that it arrives packaged with a two-way headset used to communicate in real-time with your partners.

FireTeam gameplay comes in several forms; up to four separate two-to-four-player teams lock horns in a number of scenarios ranging from capture-the-flag to a futuristic game known as GunBall. Players also have a choice of on-screen characters, each with strengths and weaknesses that complement or detract from one another when combined in various configurations.



BEAR NECESSITIES Mmm. Bear butt (above). Below: Kazooie carries Banjo to meet a giant heap of trouble.

BANJO-KAZOOIE

MANUFACTURER: Nintendo
PLATFORM: Nintendo 64
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $59.99; available now

First, there was *Super Mario 64* and it was good. Then, there was *Banjo-Kazooie*. And it was better.

Nintendo's struck gold with *Kazooie*, a quirky and lovable game about a banjo-playing bear ("Banjo") and his chatty red-crested Breegull pal ("Kazooie"). Together, the two (Banjo carries Kazooie in his backpack) must explore a graphically solid, 3-D world filled with giant monkeys, flesh-eating sharks and a thousand different perils in order to save Banjo's overly cute sister from an evil witch.

Banjo is slow, but powerful. His birdy pal is super-fast and, with some help, can fly. The duo can execute approximately 25 separate moves and attacks. Especially impressive is Kazooie's egg attack—with the proper ammunition, Banjo's pal can spit eggs machine-gun style from her mouth or eject them from her...uh...behind.

Each of *Kazooie*'s 10 levels is inhabited by strange and wonderful characters. A nearsighted mole named Bottles helps Banjo and Kazooie by teaching them new moves, and a skull-faced shaman named Mumbo Jumbo ("Me am best shaman in whole game," Mumbo quips at one point) assists the duo by turning them into different creatures to better solve the game's puzzles.

TRY IT... If you like *Super Mario 64*, *Yoshi's Story* or get fuzzy over fuzzy animals, drop a few eggs for *Banjo-Kazooie*.

The game's only weakness is its spotty and awkward camera control. Players can adjust the camera angle, but navigating Banjo around some corners will become a challenge (and sometimes a frustration). It's not enough to distract from the overall experience, but is definitely a sticking point. ■ **Greg Orlando**

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THE X-FILES

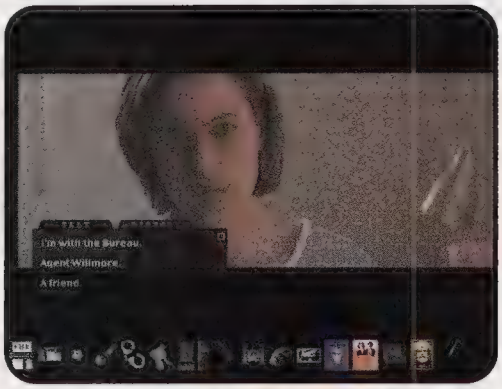
MANUFACTURER: Fox Interactive
PLATFORMS: Macintosh/Windows PC
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $39.99, available now

The truth is out there, and you trust no one—but you haven't got the right stuff to join the FBI and test out those theories in the field? Well, Fox's *X-Files* will finally afford conspiracy theorists everywhere the opportunity to conduct a full-fledged FBI investigation. It seems FBI agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully have disappeared in the Seattle area and assistant director Skinner has turned to you, agent Craig Wellmore, to get to the bottom of the situation.

The game plays out as an actual "X-Files" episode would, with the exception that the game player, as Wellmore, controls the pace and action as the mystery unfolds. Gameplay is similar to that of *Myst*; the player is immersed in a variety of interconnected point-and-click scenes and must solve puzzles and interpret clues to advance the story. A notable exception is the ability to interact with characters in the game. Not only can agent Wellmore converse with and interrogate the characters he encounters, but the gamer may also choose what mood he conveys, anywhere from facetious to belligerent. Another boon to the interface is Wellmore's personal digital assistant, which allows players to send and receive e-mail from other characters, note important game information and access a map of the Seattle area.

TRY IT... If you like the "X-Files" TV show, far-fetched conspiracies or graphic adventures such as *King's Quest*, you'll love The *X-Files*.

While it's unfortunate that Mulder and Scully don't get more screen time here, the tone and feel of the game perfectly mirrors that of the show. Overall, the *X-Files* game will appeal to X-philes everywhere, as well as to fans of in-depth interactive adventure games. ■ **Dan DiGiacomo**



TRUST NO ONE Search Mulder's office (above) in the hunt for Mulder and Scully (below).

MORTAL KOMBAT 4

MANUFACTURER: Midway
PLATFORMS: Nintendo 64, Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $59.99, Nintendo 64; Sony PlayStation, $39.99; available now

If you want blood, you got it. *Mortal Kombat 4* serves up the juice in mass quantities, proving to be the most over-the-top, fist-firmly-in-face, violent entry into the 3-D fighting genre—and certainly much more bloody than its predecessors.

Kombat 4 remains much the same the other *Kombat* games, but new twists and characters have been thrown in to keep the game from becoming stale. Now, all the characters are drawn in three dimensions and players can assault their opposition with swords, ice scepters, staffs, clubs, axes, hammers and other implements of pain. (A neat touch: With the appropriate weapon hit, a player can send his foe hurling into the game's foreground where he'll smash against the TV screen.) Each character has his own separate weapon, which can be accessed by a series of joystick commands, and can pick up another combatant's weapon once it's been knocked from his hand. Also new is the option to side-step attacks by moving up and down the battlefield—combined with the game's block command, the side-step makes *Kombat 4* more a game of move and countermove than any of the previous *Kombats*.

TRY IT... If you like *Mortal Kombat*, *Mortal Kombat II*, *Mortal Kombat III*, *Mortal Kombat Trilogy* and...well, you get the idea.

But the more things change, the more they stay the same. Blood still splatters everywhere and the old character's moves remain largely the same. For veteran players, the thrill may well have departed—playing the noble warrior Liu Kang gets a bit stale the fourth time around, especially since the cat has been there and done that since forever. ■ **Greg Orlando**

DEATH BEFORE DISMEMBERMENT *Kombat* veterans Sonya and Jax battle it out to see who can rip off whose head.

INQUEST

THE GAMING MAGAZINE #43

SPECIAL HALLOWEEN ISSUE

FREE INQUEST HAUNTED HORROR RPG MODULE!

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HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES

HEY, QUIT YER WHININ' YA BABIES. So they don't make a figure of your favorite character, or maybe you think you could do a better job. Either way, it's time to put up or shut up. The fine-lookin' figures you see on these here pages were lovingly crafted by ordinary readers just like you. The authority? Us!

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

THE WRECKING CREW

Richard Radcliffe of Manassas, Va.

From left: Thunderball is a combination of a Toy Biz Doc Sampson body and a repainted Blade head. The Wrecker was rocked together from a Toy Biz Ghost Rider body and a Toy Biz Deadpool head. Piledriver was created from a Toy Biz Johnny Storm figure and an attached Toy Biz Venom head. Lastly, Bulldozer rolls over from a Toy Biz Age of Apocalypse Sabretooth. All accessories were made from Super Sculpey.

WHAT WE GAVE AWAY!

The grand-prize winner walks away lookin' mighty mackadocious in his new Darkchylde hat and T-shirt, carrying a Darkchylde binder full of signed Darkchylde cards with him. Oh, yeah. He's also getting an autographed *Darkchylde* #1.

Prizes provided by the always audacious Randy Queen.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

SASQUATCH

Jeff Brennan of Glendale, Calif.

Alpha Flight's beastly bad-ass springs to life as a repainted 10-inch Toy Biz Beast figure with some clay hair.

DR. FATE

Michael Nowar of Boulder, Colo.

Michael maintained the mystical arts theme and transposed Marvel's Sorcerer Supreme, a Toy Biz Dr. Strange, into DC's magical being Dr. Fate. And for the final touch, he tossed on a Toy Biz Gladiator cape. Meanwhile, the evil critter by Fate's side was stolen from McFarlane Toys Spawn's Gravedigger figure.

WONDER WOMAN

Keith P. Chandler of Forest Home, Ala.

This wondrous Wonder Woman springs to life courtesy of a Toy Biz Black Cat torso, legs and hair, and a Toy Biz Elektra head and arms. The lasso looks like string.

LOCKHEED

Baldwyn Chieh of Fremont, Calif.

Kitty Pryde's dragon Lockheed was born from clay.... Huh, that's all there is to say.

Do you want in on the fun? To enter the homemade figure contest, send us at least two well-lit, clear, color photographs **(Please, no Polaroids)** of your creations in cool or funny poses. Also include your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) and e-mail address to:

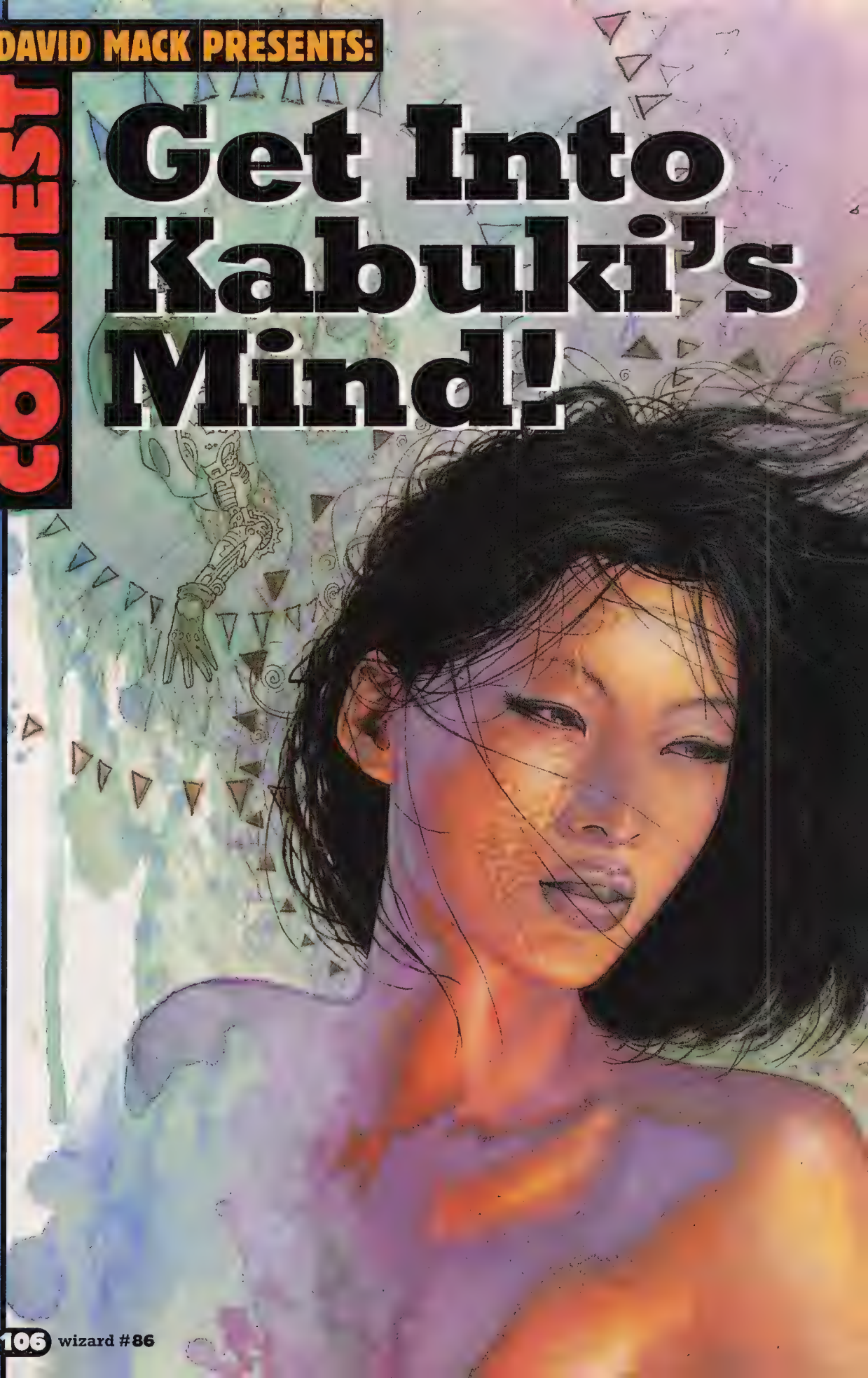
SUBMIT!

Homemade Heroes
c/o Wizard Entertainment
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

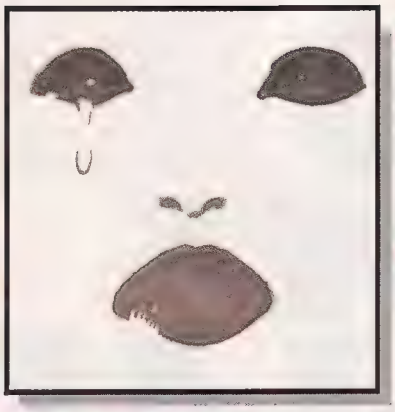
DAVID MACK PRESENTS:

CONTEST

Get Into Kabuki's Mind!



PRIZES



GRAND PRIZE (1): One mind reader wins an original David Mack painted *Kabuki* cover (left), a Mack-signed set of *Kabuki* comics and a Kabuki T-shirt.

FIRST PRIZE (5): Five psychics walk away with a David Mack signed set of *Kabuki* comics and a cool Kabuki T-shirt.

SECOND PRIZE (10): Ten telepaths each win a cool Kabuki T-shirt and the latest issue of *Kabuki* signed by David Mack.

WINNING THIS STUFF IS EASY IF YOU KNOW KABUKI. The comic is filled with tons of totally deep and poetic thought boxes. We want you to write your version of one of those thought boxes. But yours must be a poem, no longer than four lines. Make it deep, insightful, funny, whatever. Just make it good. Then attach it to the entry form below and send it in. We'll choose the most creative and interesting poems as the winners. Start writing!

PRIZES FOR THIS CONTEST PROVIDED BY DAVID MACK.

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send it to:

"Get Into Kabuki's Mind!" Contest,
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

MIND BLOWING TEXT

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, David Mack, their immediate families and anyone who's been to a psychic who asked them his name. Wouldn't they already know it? Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Don't expect us to know all this information, we're not psychics. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Get Into Kabuki's Mind!" Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by October 30,1998.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than December 4, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about November 13, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after November 13, 1998 send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Get Into Kabuki's Mind!" Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"Get Into Kabuki's Mind!" Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE OCTOBER 30, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

E-mail Address _____

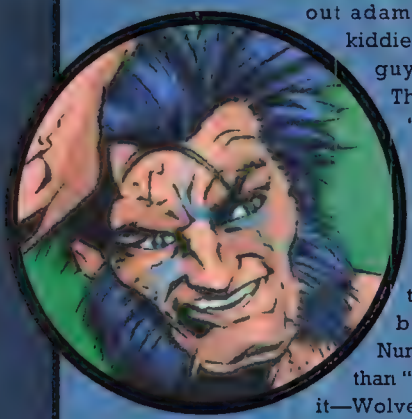
DID YOU REMEMBER TO ATTACH YOUR ENTRY?

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

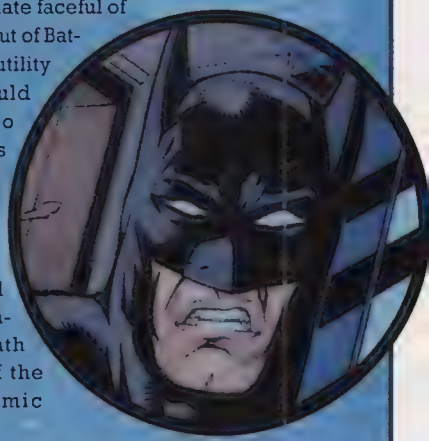
1 WOLVERINE

Okay, we realize nobody told you there was gonna be a quiz, but quit yer gripin': It's math time! Wolverine, without adamantium claws, is the kiddies' most popular comic guy from coast-to-coast. That makes him number "1." And we all *know* he'd be even more popular if he had those durned adamantium claws. So what happens when he finally gets them back? What number does he become? Number one! What's better than "1"? Nothing! That's just it—Wolverine would become a mathematical paradox if he got his metal claws back, and would blink out of existence! Maybe *that's* why Marvel's holding back.



2 BATMAN

Wardrobe! We need a new mask over on the Batman stage, stat! Looks like Batman's mask isn't fitting quite right, and that could have tragic consequences. What if Bats were to sneeze with that mask coverin' up his nostrils like it is? He'd get an immediate faceful of snot, and if he was out of Bat-Kleenex in the ol' utility belt, the Joker could get away. Who designed this cowl anyway? Joel Schumacher? Even if he did, the fact that Bats whups ass nine ways till Tuesday in eleventeen books a month makes him one of the most popular comic Joes around.



3 SPAWN

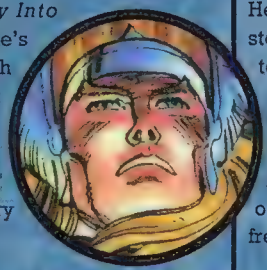
Spawn's got *green* blood? Hmmm. Suddenly, it all comes together! After 74 issues, we're suddenly told that Spawn's "role on Earth changes" in *Spawn* #75. Maybe his role changes to...that of a Vulcan! Like Spock in "Star Trek"! Yeah, Vulcans got green blood! Spawn is really Spock's love-child! Now he's gonna do a walk-on in the next "Star Trek" movie, say, "Live long and prosper," and then eviscerate some Klingons or something. Then he'll win an Academy Award, ink a seven-picture deal with Universal and buy *two* hockey teams just to show Todd McFarlane who's *really* boss. Cool!

4 WITCHBLADE

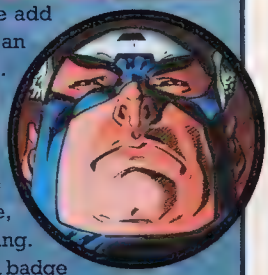
Ya ever notice that Sara Pezzini, Miss Witchblade herself, has about the flattest nose this side of Chicago Bulls star Scottie Pippen? Really. She looks like someone took a Hamilton Beach Crease-o-Matic 5000 iron and just flattened her face out. But for whatever funky reason, that must be what passes for beauty these days, 'cause your average pimple-laden comic geek thinks *Witchblade* is about the prettiest thing since last month's issue of *Playboy*. But good looks aren't everything. Let's see her go to the glass and pull down rebounds like our man Pippen. Then we'll talk.

5 THOR

Finally. And it's about damn time. After two years of limbo when there was no *Thor* title at all and the only Asgardian "Forsooth!"-fix we could get was (try not to laugh here) from the "lost gods" in *Journey Into Mystery*, the Odinson is back! And he's whackin' people upside the head with sacred Mjolnir (that mystic croquet mallet of his) double-quick, like he was makin' up for lost time or something. The thunder god is thunderin' and the new *Thor* kicks ass in every way a comic can!

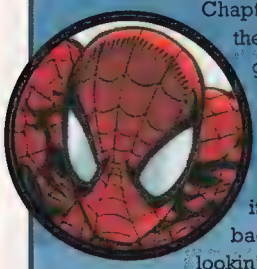


6 CAPTAIN AMERICA



Man, them "long angle" shots sure add on the years and make ya look like an old fart. Not that it matters to Cap. He's the ol' warhorse who's been stomping ass on Nazis, commies, terrorists, supervillains and the French (Like Batroc!) since approximately forever. Yessiree, Bob. Cap doesn't worry about aging. He wears his years of service like a badge of honor. And, since he's now a senior citizen, he also gets free coffee at McDonald's and half-price movie tickets.

7 SPIDER-MAN

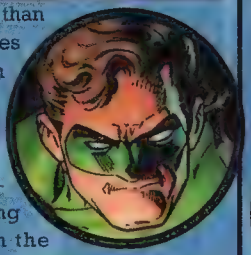


Big things are happening with everyone's favorite Web-head these days. Like what? you ask. Like the current "Final Chapter" storyline that Marvel says "ends the Spider-Man saga." Spooky! Then we get *Spider-Man: Chapter One*, the 13-issue origin-reboot dealy-job. Kooky! And *then* the whole big honkin' streamlined new direction for Spidey. Ooky! And any way ya wanna slice it—the buzz is back, the excitement is back, people are talking and Spidey's lookin' primed and ready to kick some ass.

8 GREEN LANTERN (KYLE RAYNER)

Speaking of people talking, welcome to Green Lantern Central. Ever since the folks at DC brought *two* Green Lanterns into the limelight for a six-issue story, comic fans have been foaming at the mouth. More than they usually do, we mean. Kyle Rayner's the young turk and Hal Jordan (see No. 9) is the established guy. The controversy as to who's better runs hot and heavy, and in every poll we've run, Kyle comes out ahead of the old guard. Take that, gramps.

9 GREEN LANTERN (HAL JORDAN)



Hey, it's gramps! And in less time than it takes Hal Jordan to put his dentures in, we'll tell you that we're damn happy this GL rivalry plays out in comics. If this kind of crazed competition took place in...oh...maybe the ugly, sordid world of figure skating, Hal would probably be hiring some fat guy to whack Kyle in the kneecap right about now. Thank goodness for the peaceful, safe haven of comic books where everything is trees and flowers and chirping birds.

10 NIGHTWING

For those of you who haven't paid attention for the last three years, here's a news flash: Dick Grayson, the Batman-sidekick with the great legs they called "Robin," grew up. He's now called Nightwing and he's kickin' ass left, right and center in his own monthly book, keeping the dirty streets of Blüdhaven as clean as he can. He's also slowly but surely gaining a following that just might one day rival Batman's. Not bad for someone who used to run around in tight shorts.

MORT OF THE MONTH

ONE LAME-ASS CHARACTER

SEÑOR MUERTE

¡Ay, ay, ay! ¡Es Señor Muerte, un mort muy, muy macho!

Ramon Garcia was an illegal-casino owner who just happened to have a dorky red costume in his closet that could toss 10,000 volts of electricity at someone. So, like any good hood, he went around trying to brain-fry rival gambling kingpins and take over their operations. This ran him up against Luke Cage, Marvel's Hero For Hire (Sweet Christmas!), and in true Mort fashion, Muerte's suit backfired and he char-broiled himself.

And just in case you flunked Spanish in high school, "Señor Muerte" means "Mr. Death." Good thing this loser lived up to his name.

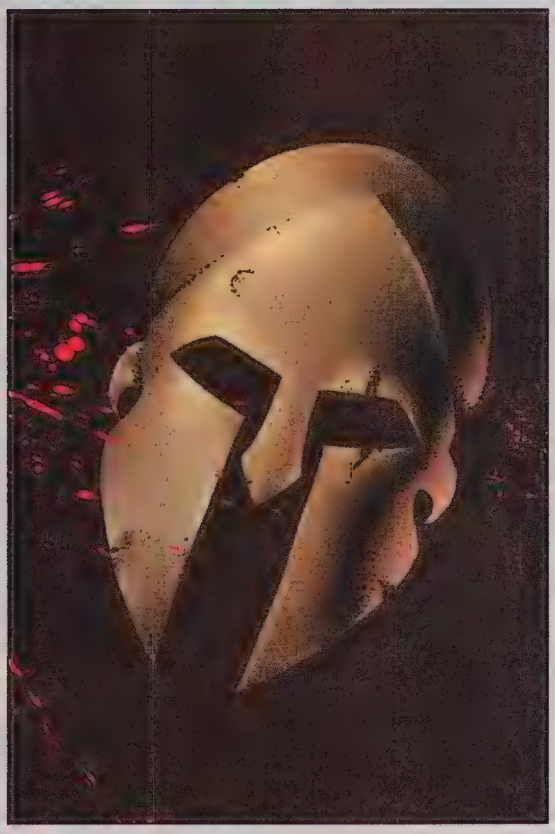
MORTOMETER

picks

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN SEPTEMBER

PICK OF THE LITTER

book of the month



300 #5 (OF 5)

DARK HORSE Hide the women and children! Slaughter's on the menu as the ancient Spartans are betrayed by one of their own, surrounded by the powerful Persian army and overwhelmed by superior forces. The Spartan's stand at Thermopylae pass will go down as a tremendous loss for the Greeks, but Spartan King Leonidas is smiling. He's got a secret, and it'll make the evil, aggressive, expansionist Persians shake in their lambskin boots. By Frank Miller and Lynn Varley. MR. $3.95

AKIKO #28

SIRIUS To grease a giant's palm, fifth-grade mistress of mayhem Akiko is gonna need a massive amount of Crisco—or a monster bribe. She's on a quest to recover items for the behemoth Bornstone. Who's he? Why, only the possessor of an elixir that can cure her pal Professor Lunderdorf. Things get hairy, though, when she meets a nice young man and makes the prince of the planet Smoo very, very jealous. By Mark Crilley **$2.50**

ASTRO CITY: FAMILY ALBUM

HOMAGE/IMAGE

Family albums, on the whole, are about as exciting as soup spoons. *Astro City*'s family album, however, is 224 pages of action and adventure about this funky city where superheroes are as common as Burger Kings. (But won't give you as much gas.) This trade paperback features stories about Astro City denizens the First Family, Jack-In-The-Box, Junkman and Looney Leo the lion. It reprints *Astro City* (vol. 2) #1-#3 and #10-#13. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$19.95—softcover; $49.95—hardcover**

AVENGERS #10

MARVEL The Avengers celebrate the anniversary of their formation, but that old-school jerk Grim Reaper is looking to usher in a brand-new era of bad feelings. Plus, the slinky sorceress Scarlet Witch seeks help from fellow conjurer Agatha Harkness to deal with her summoning of dead Avenger Wonder Man. By Kurt Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey. **$1.99**

BATTLE CHASERS #5

CLIFFHANGER/IMAGE On the list of things to chase, "battle" should be right up there with "cold sores" and "life without parole." What does chasing battle get anyone? Well, the sword-and-sorcery adventurers in *Battle Chasers* get to meet up with a dastardly fiend in a metal mask, Lord August. And his vile plan might spell certain doom for his foes. By Joe Madureira, Munier Sharrieff and Tom McWeeney. **$2.50**

BONE #34

CARTOON BOOKS Who killed Kingdok the giant rat creature? Well, if you believe the word on the street, Fone Bone's your man...er, Bone. So while Fone and his cousin

MR TITLES DENOTED WITH AN MR CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

Smiley return to the valley and meet up with the princess Thorn, the stupid, stupid rat creatures are sharpening their teeth, planning revenge on Kingdok's supposed killer. By Jeff Smith. **$2.95**

CAPTAIN AMERICA BOOKS

MARVEL We pledge allegiance to Captain America, past and present. Back during the dark days of WW II, Cap and Namor struggle to save the undersea kingdom of Atlantis from the Human Torch's misguided horde. Check out *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty* #3 for the full story. In the present-day *Captain America* #11, Cap's being mind-controlled by a mystery villain (like we'd spoil the surprise), and super-spy Sharon Carter is Cap's only hope for salvation. Too bad Carter's real busy trying to prevent a nuclear holocaust. By Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Dan Green (*Sentinel of Liberty*), and Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang (*Captain America*). **$1.99 each**

THE COLLECTED BOX OFFICE POISON VOL. 1

ANTARCTIC PRESS Love is in the air and roaches are crawling under the covers. Frustrated writer Sherman Davies is dating his dream girl Dorothy. All should be right with the world, but she's a world-class slob...and maybe crazy, to boot. Plus, learn all about Sherman's various friends and enemies in modern-day New York City. This 160-page book reprints *Box Office Poison* #0-#4. By Alex Robinson. **MR $14.95**

CONCRETE: STRANGE ARMOR TRADE PAPERBACK

DARK HORSE Speech writer Ronald Lithgow becomes the biggest rock hero around (literally) when his puny frame is changed from warm flesh and blood to cold stone. Calling himself Concrete, Lithgow's poked and

newreleases

FIRST TIME OUT

BLACK PANTHER #1 **(Marvel)** African King T'Challa leaves his homeland to take up residence in Brooklyn and fight crime as the Black Panther. **$2.50**

BLADE #1 **(Marvel)** Bloodsuckers, beware. Half-human/half-vampire Blade is on one of those quest-thingeys to destroy all the undead. **$3.50**

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER #1 **(Dark Horse)** Like, somebody's *totally* going to kill a whole bunch of vampires and we're so sure it's high-school honey Buffy Summers. **$2.95**

DARING ESCAPES #1 **(Todd McFarlane Productions/Image)** Escape artist Harry Houdini sets forth on a quest to find a magical statue before the armies of Heaven, Hell or a mysterious third force steal it away. **$2.50**

DC ONE MILLION #1 **(DC Comics)** It's future shock of the worst kind when the Justice League from the 853rd century comes back to the present to invite DC heroes to a great celebration in their time. Big mistake. **$2.95**

DRACULA VS. ZORRO #1 **(Image)** Got blood? The undead fiend tries to drain the heroic masked swordsman of all his precious fluids. **$2.95**

FIGHTING AMERICAN: DOGS OF WAR #1 **(Awesome)** Patriotic hero Fighting American battles a super-soldier without morals. **$2.50**

GHOST #1 **(Dark Horse)** Scantily clad supernatural avenger Ghost has her world ripped apart by incredible revelations. **$2.95**

INHUMANS #1 **(Marvel)** Black Bolt, the mute leader of the superpowered Inhumans, has something to say. But if he says it, his superpowered voice will destroy the world of Attilan. **$2.99**

JLA IN CRISIS SECRET FILES #1 **(DC Comics)** Justice League members relive the various crises that forged the team into Earth's Mightiest Heroes, or something like that. **$4.95**

PAINKILLER JANE/DARKCHYLDE #1 **(Event)** Lovely ladies Painkiller Jane and Darkchylde meet and evil, we suspect, won't be staring these women in the face. **$2.95**

PUNISHER #1 **(Marvel)** Ghostly guns are a-blazing when the Punisher becomes a supernatural vigilante. **$2.99**

SUPERMAN: THE DOOMSDAY WARS #1 **(DC Comics)** Proving you can't keep a dead character buried, the brutish killer Doomsday returns to kill the Man of Steel...again. **$4.95**

TERMINATOR #1 **(Dark Horse)** Two Terminators are sent back from the future to kill young John Connor, who, we might add, is already being hunted by someone else. **$2.95**

WARLOCK #1 **(Marvel)** One of Adam Warlock's friends is dead and it looks like Drax the Destroyer did the dirty deed. Now, Warlock's gonna need help from his pals in the Infinity Watch to stop the Destroyer. **$2.99**

X-MEN: LIBERATORS #1 **(Marvel)** Ex-X-Men Shadowcat, Nightcrawler and Colossus team with the killer mutant Omega Red to save the life of a small mutant child who can kill with but a touch. **$2.99**

prodded by government agencies and sets his sights on sweet freedom—as well as the pretty researcher Maureen Vonnegut. *Strange Armor* reprints the awesome five-issue mini-series of the same name. By Paul Chadwick. **$16.95**

DANGER GIRL #5

CLIFFHANGER/IMAGE Somebody's got a blind date with death, and it looks to be one of the female spies in Danger Girl. Now, the evil would-be world beater Major

Maxim is giving the girls a lesson in subtraction: Five members of Danger Girl minus one dead member, minus one captured member, minus one missing in action equals...er, lots of trouble. And not even the mysterious Secret Agent Zero may be able to put the lovely Danger Girls back together again. By J. Scott Campbell, Andy Hartnell and Alex Garner. **$2.50**

DAREDEVIL #1

MARVEL Strap us into the electric chair and fry our fruit salad! Super-writer/director Kevin Smith is taking over *Daredevil*. As a serial killer runs unchecked through the streets of New York, the blind Daredevil finds he's hard-pressed to find the culprit *and* watch a small child at the same time. When the child's guardian tells DD that angels drew her to him, the horned hero's faith will be sorely tested as well. By Kevin Smith, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. Smith says, "Traditionally, comic books have been able to handle a fair amount of theology—some people call it Christian mythology. Neil Gaiman did it quite a bit in his *Sandman* run, Garth Ennis does it pretty regularly in *Preacher*.... So I think it's no more or less than any of those books. I'm certainly not steeping [*Daredevil*] in unapproachable material." **$2.50**

THE FLASH #1,000,000

DC COMICS Since you'll be deader than the dinosaurs by the time DC Comics titles really make it to issue #1,000,000, DC has decided to bring the future to the present. All this month, DC's #1,000,000 books put current DC heroes in touch with the distant future (the 853rd century, to be exact). Here, the Flash does the time warp again, meets a futuristic Captain Marvel and the two battle the evil Spice Gi...uh, we mean Captain Cold and Heatwave. By Mark Waid, Michael Jan Friedman, Joshua Hood and Jose Marzan Jr. **$1.99**

GREEN LANTERN #1,000,000

DC COMICS In the distant future, Green Lantern visits Starman's orbital fortress, races against an android in a chariot and becomes the world's most beleaguered zookeeper when the beasts in a traveling menagerie bust free and tear the place up. Plus, the misguided, super-intelligent stellar computer Solaris (imagine a sun with a brain) rears its fiendish head. By Ron Marz, Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary. Plus, sayeth Marz, "There's a traitor who's going to betray the Justice League, and Kyle finds out who it is." Remaining silent on the details, Marz would only say the traitor is from the future.... **$1.99**

HITMAN #1,000,000

DC COMICS Sociopathic, superpowered hitman Tommy Monaghan is warming a bar stool with his butt when he becomes an unwitting participant in this #1,000,000 hoo-hah. Four punks from the 853rd century drag Monaghan, their favorite hero, into the future—allowing the hitman to break the all-time record for longest time between kills. By Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Andrew Chiu. **$2.50**

IRON MAN #10

MARVEL Guess who might not make it to issue #11, let alone #1,000,000? (Hint: his name rhymes with "Iron Man.") IM faces off with the mystery villain who's been making his life just slightly worse than a living hell. After receiving a horrible beating last issue, Shell-head might not be up for the fight, even with his Avengers teammates helping him out. By Kurt Busiek and Sean Chen. **$1.99**

JLA #1,000,000

DC COMICS Who watches the Watchtower? Good question! It seems a ragtag bunch of new Justice League members (Orion, Steel, Plastic Man, etc.) are faced with the daunting prospect of defending their headquarters against the fearsome attack of the futuristic Justice Legion A. The Legion wants in the Watchtower, and its near-omnipotent members Superman and Wonder Woman don't look like they're selling Tupperware, if you catch our drift. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.99**

JLA: YEAR ONE #11 (OF 12)

DC COMICS Today, we declare our Independence Day! (We hope...) Earth has been invaded and enslaved by an evil-minded alien race, and this time no stupid Macintosh PowerBook is gonna save us all. Superman and Batman have both fallen to the extraterrestrial villains and the planet's only hope is the fledgling Justice League of America. Yikes! By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Barry Kitson and Michael Bair. **$1.99**

KANE #23

DANCING ELEPHANT PRESS Whew! It's like some disco inferno at the New Eden bar—minus the disco, that is. An arsonist has set the tavern ablaze and detective Kane is called upon to investigate the fire, all the time unaware that the mysterious killer called "The Blind Man" is stalking him. By Paul Grist. **$2.95**

NIGHTWING #1,000,000

DC COMICS The Dynamic Duo is back in action, but it's like no Dynamic Duo Nightwing has ever been a part of. The former Robin is thrust into action with the Batman from the 853rd century and fighting crime just got more dangerous. A whole lot more dangerous. Sure, the Batman of the future is a hero, but can he be trusted? By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. **$1.99**

PREACHER #43

VERTIGO/DC COMICS On his quest to find God, Preacher Jesse Custer meets up with an old friend, one who's got some secrets about Jesse's past dating back to scenic, hyper-violent Angelville. Elsewhere, weird things are afoot in the town of Salvation, Texas, and the ominously named Meat Man launches a decidedly evil plan. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR. $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY: HOLY S-WORD! WE'RE CANCELED!!

ACCLAIM The world's worst superhero team is now the world's most defunct superhero team. Join Quantum and his pal Woody in their last great adventure, as the two switch bodies with each other, go to the bathroom and other wacky stuff. This 96-page trade paperback reprints *Quantum and Woody* #9-#12 with some new material for good measure. By Christopher Priest and MD Bright. **$7.95**

NIGHTWING #1,000,000

alsoshipping

MORE BOOKS TO GET

BATMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) It's back to the future as the present-day Batman ends up on Pluto in the 853rd century in *Batman #1,000,000*. In *Detective Comics* #1,000,000, a futuristic Batman invades the 20th century Batcave. **$1.99 each**

CURSE OF THE SPAWN #25 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image) Life sucks when you're 18, acne-ridden and possessed by the spirit of a dead hellspawn named Angel–as Harley Parrish is. **$1.95**

DEADPOOL #22 (Marvel) Kicking and screaming, Deadpool comes face-to-face with his destiny. And with Cable and X-Force, too. **$1.99**

DIVINE RIGHT #7 (WildStorm/Image) Pizza peddler Max Faraday and his allies the Fallen battle Rath in the lifeless Hollow Realm. **$2.50**

DIVINE RIGHT #7

FANTASTIC FOUR #11 (Marvel) In the quaint dung pit called Genosha, the evil Crucible strikes a blow at the Fantastic Four. **$1.99**

JAY & SILENT BOB #4 (Oni Press) When slackers Jay and Silent Bob make it to where they're going, they find that it isn't there anymore. **MR $2.95**

SPAWN #78 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image) There's a serial killer loose, but Spawn's busy getting answers about his purpose on Earth from the bum Cogliostro. **$1.95**

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS (Marvel) It's the end of the Spideyverse as we know it. The fiend Norman Osborn initiates the mysterious "Ritual of Five" in *Sensational Spider-Man* #33 and resumes his career as the Green Goblin (while Peter Parker receives some shocking news) in *Amazing Spider-Man* #441. In *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #97, the wall-crawler makes an incredible discovery, and Spider-Man fights the Green Goblin–and loses–in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #263. Finally, celebrate the end of the Spidey saga with a cold cola and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #98, where Spidey has to save the city one last time before he saves it again in his upcoming reboot. **$1.99 each**

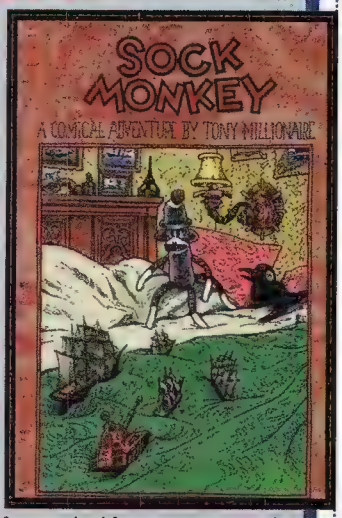
STAR WARS BOOKS (Dark Horse) Jedi Knight Kyle Katarn must stop Dark Jedi from looting the Valley of the Jedi in *Star Wars: Dark Forces–Jedi Knight GSA*, and Imperial lackey Mara Jade murders the wrong person in *Star Wars: Mara Jade–By The Emperor's Hand* #2. **Dark Forces–$24.95; Mara Jade–$2.95**

SUPERMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) Superman travels to the 853rd century, is mistaken for Bizarro and attacked by superpowered citizens in *Action Comics* #1,000,000. Vandal Savage wreaks havoc on the present in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #1,000,000, and in *Superman* #1,000,000, the Supes from the 853rd century struggles to save the present from Lex Luthor's depravity. Future versions of Superman, Resurrection Man and the Teen Titans battle the killer sun Solaris in *Adventures of Superman* #1,000,000, and in *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow* #1,000,000, Superman gathers his Justice League allies for a final shoot-out with Solaris. **$1.99 each**

WITCHBLADE #26 (Top Cow/Image) Witchblade-wielder Sara Pezzini knows who killed her old man. But is she woman enough to go after the killer? **$2.50**

WOLVERINE #130-#131 (Marvel) A horribly wounded Wolverine must save a young boy while his crazy, evil wife Viper tightens her grip on the island of Madripoor in *Wolverine* #130. Then in #131, the feral Wolvie must climb the Himalayas to stop a killer organism from destroying Madripoor. **$1.99**

SOCK MONKEY #1



Tremble, gentle readers, before the might of the Sock Monkey named Uncle Gabby! Gabby's got the crazy idea that a crystal chandelier in his home is Heaven—and damn if that little bundle of cotton ain't gonna try to get to the promised land with the help of his alcoholic, talking toy crow friend. But there's an armada of toy warships aligned against our absorbent hero. By Tony Millionaire, who says, "I actually set the Sock Monkey up inside my apartment in Brooklyn in order to draw him. Toward the end, when he gets lit on fire, it got really dangerous." **$2.95**

ROBIN #1,000,000

DC COMICS Imagine the stories the 853rd century Robin (a mechanized construct—call him the Toy Wonder) will tell…"When I was your age, I had to make the ultimate sacrifice to help my partner Batman save the universe from the killer sun, Solaris. And, by gum, you never heard me complain!" By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. "[The future Robin] and our current-day Batman are trapped on Pluto in the future and have to get off," Dixon says. "Pluto is sort of a planet-sized Arkham Asylum in the future, and Robin the Toy Wonder has to help Batman escape to join the JLA." **$1.99**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #67

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The Goblin," Part 3 (of 4). Has the Golden Age Sandman gone mad? Wesley Dodds has taken to wearing his Sandman costume full-time, but is he doing it because he's crazier than Europeans at a soccer match, or because he's determined to catch the serial kidnapper/killer called the Goblin? By Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. **MR. $2.50**

SAVAGE SHE-DRAGON #53

IMAGE While the Savage Dragon is labeled MIA, Max Damage and his inept band of losers (Brute Force) are out to save Chicago. Superheroine Savage She-Dragon is out to save Chicago, too—from Damage and his motley crew. By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

STORMWATCH #11

WILDSTORM/IMAGE Ah, the bureaucracy. StormWatch has been ripped to shreds by aliens, so there's nothing left to do but file a report to the United Nations. But the report opens a can of worms and now StormWatch's commander Jackson King finds himself questioning his role. By Warren Ellis, Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary. **$2.50**

SUPERMAN FOR ALL SEASONS #3 (OF 4)

DC COMICS See, kids, money really can't buy happiness. Check out Lex Luthor—the guy sweats $500 bills but he's losing his hair and looks angry enough to spit bullets. Why? One word: Superman. And he's stealing Luthor's glory. What's a rich, balding, criminally inclined mastermind to do? Nothing pretty, we'd imagine. Probably kill just about everybody in Metropolis or something. By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$4.95**

THOR #5

MARVEL What could be worse than an uninterrupted block of Hanson on the radio? Try shock-radio disc jockey Charles Diamond polluting the airwaves with his venomous attacks on the Thunder God. When Thor confronts the sleazeball, he's going to encounter a problem that can't be solved with muscles. By Dan Jurgens, John Romita Jr. and Klaus Janson. **$1.99**

THUNDERBOLTS #20

MARVEL To quote a great thinker, "It's going to be a slobberknocker!" The new, low-down, no-good Masters of Evil fight the old, low-down, no-good Masters of Evil (now called the Thunderbolts) in a fight to set things right. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna. **$1.99**

TRANSMETROPOLITAN #15

HELIX/DC COMICS "Year of the Bastard," Part 3 (of 6). Politics are in the air and Spider Jerusalem is hard at work, throwing Transmetropolitan's presidential election into turmoil. As smiling Sen. Bob Heller makes his run for greater power, Spider's assistant takes a few well-aimed pot shots at the grizzled journalist. **MR. $2.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #361

MARVEL In anticipation of the Cajun mutant Gambit's return to the X-Men, the team is stocking up on gumbo and Uncle Foo Foo's Cajun Jerk Slather. Gambit's got a lotta 'splainin' to do, mostly about how he made it from Antarctica to New York and why he abandoned his true love, Rogue. Meanwhile, the X-Men's leader, Professor Xavier, is rendered helpless before a dangerous foe: incontinence. By Steven T. Seagle, Steve Skroce and Tim Townsend. **$1.99**

X-MEN #81

MARVEL Old friends Nightcrawler, Shadowcat and Colossus return to the X-Men and the entire team *finally* begins hunting for the missing Professor X. But what does all this have to do with the all-new team of X-Men? By Joe Kelly, Adam Kubert and Mark Farmer. **$1.99**

characterprofile

RAP SHEET

THOR

MJOLNIR: Forged from the mystical metal uru and enchanted by Odin, none can lift Mjolnir unless worthy. Odin, Thor, Beta Ray Bill, Loki, Captain America and even DC's Wonder Woman (*Marvel vs. DC* #2) have all hefted it.

NEAR-INDESTRUCTIBLE: Mjolnir was actually shattered by the Destroyer (*Journey Into Mystery* #119) and in battle with a Celestial (*Thor* #389).

ENCHANTMENTS: Besides summoning storm elements, firing energy and opening dimensional portals, Mjolnir returns to the exact spot it was thrown from.

SCAR TISSUE: After Hela, the ruler of Hel, slapped a curse on Thor that scarred his face and made his bones brittle, he wore protective armor and grew a beard. (*Thor* #361)

FLIGHT: Nope, he can't fly, but by throwing his hammer and holding its leather thong, Thor can will Mjolnir to take him where he wants.

NEAR-INVULNERABLE: Thor was once flattened by Juggernaut, but came back to transport Juggy to another dimension. (*Thor* #411-#412)

COURAGE: Thor once ripped his way *inside* a huge cosmic Celestial and destroyed its core. Too bad the Celestial barely noticed. (*Thor* #388)

RIBBIT: After being magically transformed into a frog, Thor made his way to Mjolnir and became a 6' 6" Frog of Thunder! (*Thor* #366)

SUPER-STRENGTH: *Much* more powerful than a locomotive, Thor actually *pulled* Avengers Island closer to the mainland. (*Avengers* #301)

ORIGIN

The son of Odin, All-Father of the Norse realm of the gods, Thor has vowed to discover who was behind Asgard's destruction and find its missing inhabitants.

Thor was almost killed by the Destroyer in *Thor* (vol. 2) #1, and revived in #2 by a mysterious being named Marnot...for a price. After Thor failed to save the life of paramedic Jake Olson, he agreed to assume Olson's human identity to atone for his negligence.

NOW APPEARING

The god of thunder can be found monthly in the pages of *Thor* and *Avengers*. While Thor's busy fighting DJs this month (see *Thor* listing on page 114 for info), writer Dan Jurgens says, "In #6, Thor and Hercules journey to Olympus and start to find out that some of the destructive events on Asgard are connected to events on Olympus, too. All this is a back story on finding out what happened to Asgard and where Odin and the rest of the gods are."

REPORT card

COMIC BOOK REVIEWS

BY *WIZARD* EDITORS BRIAN CUNNINGHAM, DOUGLAS GOLDSTEIN AND MIKE SEARLE

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Cap-ital offense

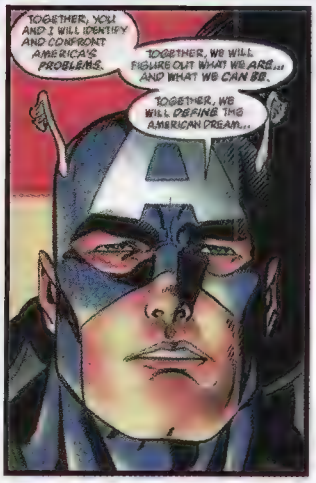
ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#8
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Mark Waid, Ron Garney, Dale Eaglesham and Andy Kubert
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: To serve his country, Steve Rogers was injected with an experimental Super-Soldier Serum which transformed him into a physically perfect man. Armed with an indestructible shield and unsurpassed leadership qualities, Rogers fights for the American Dream as Captain America.

The Good: The set-ups have been promising. A shape-shifting Skrull replacing the head of crime group HYDRA (issue #5) and later doubling as Cap (with the real Cap as his captive) definitely caught our attention. The recent "Live Kree or Die" storyline (#8) with a modern-day concentration camp was certainly powerful (especially when Cap found it and beat up that Kree guard). Unfortunately....

The Bad: Too many scenes are unbelievably cheeseball. Issue #2 had a dozen over-the-top references to the bond Cap has with his shield, so, predictably, he loses his shield at the bottom of the ocean at the end of the issue. In issue #6, it's preposterous that the entire nation riots after the Cap impostor tells them Skrulls have invaded America. Or, after Cap ends his impostor's charade in *Cap* #7, he gives some cornball speech we've all heard a billion times about what his role in America is. And then the issue ends with a scene we've only seen a *zillion* times: Cap atop the Statue of Liberty at sunset renewing his patriotic spirit. Groan.

If the plots are a little shaky, so is the characterization. Sometimes Cap's portrayal is on the money (the afore-mentioned Kree guard slugfest and Cap's interaction with Hawkeye in #3 were fun), but these moments are few. Cap should be a no-nonsense *good guy*, not a terse, angry fighter with an attitude problem as he is portrayed while fighting HYDRA in issue #4 and #5. And would Cap really be dopey enough to test a new shield in the hallways of Avengers Mansion, where it causes some property damage? Don't the Avengers have a training room for that? (And a sidenote: Tony Stark already designed a good duplicate of Cap's shield years ago when Cap was called The Captain. Why did this new shield go wrong?)



Then there's the supporting cast...or lack thereof. There really isn't any in *Cap*. We have some subplots around Sharon Carter and the Red Skull; however, Sharon's a one-dimensional psycho militant whose subplot doesn't even conclude in the pages of *Captain America*, but in her own mini-series. Lame!

The Buzz: Aside from gaining a spin-off series *Sentinel of Liberty*, Cap just got a new shield in *Cap* #9. The issue also kicks off a storyline concentrating on Steve Rogers, which could be a good sign for characterization.

The Skinny: Admittedly, *Captain America*'s relaunch came with unfair expectations of top-notch drama and high-octane action. Even still, the book disappointed us with clichés, overblown scenes and inconsistent characterization. We're still waiting for the real Cap to show up. ■

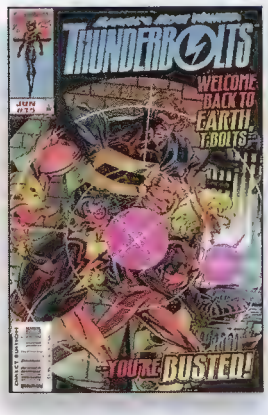
Ugh! How many times have we heard this cornball speech?

Sometimes Cap sounds and acts like Cap, but these moments are few and far between.

THE GRADE: C-

THUNDERBOLTS

Lightning struck...but what now?



ISSUES REVIEWED: #6-#17
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley, Vince Russel and Scott Hanna
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need To Know: Evil Baron Zemo disguised his Masters of Evil team as the benevolent Thunderbolts (Zemo/Citizen V, Goliath/Atlas, Beetle/Mach-1, Screaming Mimi/Songbird, Fixer/Techno, Moonstone/Meteorite and Jolt) following the Avengers' and FF's apparent deaths in order to conquer the world through trust. When the real heroes returned, the T-bolts' secret was revealed, and the team has been on the run ever since.

The Good: The concept that drove this book from issues #1-#12 was one of the most enjoyable surprises to hit comic books. Marvel launched *Thunderbolts* as a new team book "replacing" the Avengers during their "deaths," and when the end of the first issue revealed them to be the Masters of Evil, we were hooked. The team's duplicity and scheming has been a joy to read.

Part of that enjoyable read is due to how these characters adjust to being heroes and then thrust back to being villains. Mach-1 was enjoying the admiration a hero gets, while Moonstone only saw different ways to exploit her criminal opportunities.

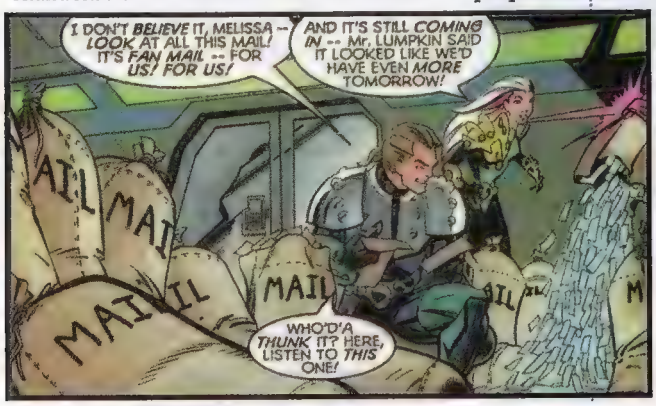
The book also has great continuity, with innumerable references to Marvel history, and appearances by other heroes. For instance, when the villains Elements of Doom (just one example of many cool villains that have been pulled from Marvel's files) set up their headquarters in New York's Central Park, you'd think all the NYC heroes would show up. They do.

The Bad: This book has turned 180 degrees since the jig was up and Zemo's scheme was defeated in *Thunderbolts* #12. Since issue #13, most of the drama has left *Thunderbolts* since there's no new direction to propel the book forward. Without the tension, the characters aren't as interesting. Yes, it's been fun to watch them struggling with their newfound adoration as heroes, but that's over with. And on top of that, since issue #13, most of their new challenges are weak. They've fought an alien army in another dimension, the Lightningrods (formerly known as the comedy relief super-team, the Great Lakes Avengers) and a robot Hulk. We need something more.

Overall, the book also seems too simplistic. Sometimes the characters and events are so cleanly defined that there is no depth to the book. Jolt is the youthful idealist who never changes, Atlas is the eternal follower and Moonstone's the manipulator. Plus, the plots come across as silly: Fixer dies and "downloads" himself into a robotic body? It turns out there's a *real* Citizen V? Just as the T-bolts are giving themselves up in issue #12, they're teleported to another dimension?

The Buzz: The Thunderbolts are due to finally duke it out with the popular Avengers this fall in *Thunderbolts* #22 and *Avengers* #12.

The Skinny: A fascinating book with an interesting concept has become a very dull book now that the concept has run its course. We hope there'll be more to it soon, or else we won't even care about that Avengers brawl. ■



Where is this book GOING? Since issue #12, this series has lost all its steam.

It was interesting how these villains took to being heroes.

THE GRADE: B-

HITMAN

Misses the target

ISSUES REVIEWED: #21-#28
GENRE: Action/adventure
PUBLISHER: DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Garth Ennis, John McCrea, Steven Pugh, Garry Leach
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.25/Monthly

What You Need to Know: After surviving an encounter with extraterrestrial parasites, Tommy Monaghan develops X-ray vision and mind-reading superpowers. Unknown to the world at large, he uses these powers to aid in his line of work—that of a mercenary hitman.

The Good: *Hitman* is a genuinely funny book. From slapstick to witty dialogue, the situations and characters in *Hitman* are hilarious. In issue #21, while sneaking out the fire escape to avoid his girlfriend's parents, Monaghan ends up falling through a window and into an in-progress drug deal. His reputation proceeding him, the dealers think Monaghan's there to kill them, and though he tries to convince them otherwise, chaos ensues when another dealer startles everyone by kicking open the front door with a bunch of McDonald's bags in his arms. Taking a novel approach, issue #22's Christmas story has Monaghan tracking down a chemically powered abomination dressed in Santa costume, the whole story told in Dr. Seuss-like rhyme. While all this is going on, the cast of characters Monaghan visits in his local bar—from the zany creature who only says "I am Baytor!" to Monaghan's best friend Natt and his wise-ass commentaries—keeps readers rolling on the floor.

Despite being a hired killer, main character Tommy Monaghan is likable and sympathetic. You feel for this guy as he struggles with his conscience and tries only to kill those who deserve it. Amid sincere dialogue and solid character interaction, a lot of thought-provoking questions about morality are asked. Monaghan only kills "bad guys," but how do you define "good"? And can a former police officer date a guy who kills people for a living?

The Bad: It's too much of a struggle to find out who these great characters are. A question as simple as "who is everybody?" is never answered. New readers will be lost as they encounter key characters without explanation, including Monaghan's friends, Mafia guys, British commandos (many of whom are drawn confusingly similar to each other). And exactly what are Monaghan's powers? You wouldn't know from the issues we read since they're nonexistent save for the one time Monaghan uses them to probe into a dying killer's mind (#25).

Part of the lack of clarity stems from the fact that half the time *Hitman* suffers from too much action and not enough dialogue; the other half, it's just the opposite.

Amazingly enough, in spite of major action scenes straight outta some Hollywood flick, the book's pacing is real slow in spots. The "Who Dares Wins" five-parter rambled on and could have been condensed to three issues. Between adventures, Monaghan and Natt hang out in the bar and hang out in the bar and hang out...well, you get the idea.

The Buzz: *Hitman* has hot writer Garth Ennis (*Preacher*) in its favor. Check comic book stores for the two *Hitman* trade paperbacks.

The Skinny: *Hitman*'s a fun read with a cool main character. But with slow pacing and a lack of basic character introduction, it shoots itself in the foot. ■

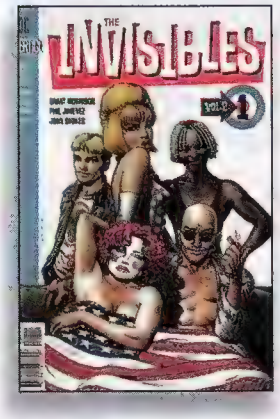
Hitman is loaded with hysterical situations and characters. Take mob boss Men's Room Louie, for instance. He only conducts "business" on the can.

Sometimes the story pacing is pretty slow. A lot of times, pages will be spent with Monaghan sitting in a bar.

THE GRADE: C+

THE INVISIBLES VOL. 2

A trippy 'X-Files'—but better



ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#17
GENRE: Adult action/adventure/intrigue
PUBLISHER: Vertigo/DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Grant Morrison, Phil Jimenez, Chris Weston, John Stokes and Ray Kryssing
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need To Know: Every paranoid conspiracy theory you've ever heard is true, as ultra-dimensional entities control all governments via their earthly agents. Fighting for the freedom of humanity is the vast Invisible Army (the book's stars include King Mob, Ragged Robin, Lord Fanny, Jack Frost and Boy). Oh, and the world ends on December 22, 2012.

The Good: *Invisibles* makes "The X-Files" look tame. Each page of *Invisibles* barrages readers with mind-blowing concepts that are all wrapped inside twisted, paranoid conspiracies. Want examples? Audio viruses exist (to catch them, all ya gotta do is hear a particular sound). The United States has hidden concentration camps. The school system is designed to groom children for 9 to 5 weekday labor. The AIDS outbreak was planned by a government faction that also has a hidden cure.

The characters themselves are diverse and eccentric. Their dialogue is sharp as a tack, with each voice distinct. What *isn't* clear sometimes is who is a good guy in the Invisible Army and who's a bad guy, and those mind games add to the book's paranoid conspiracy angle.

Invisibles' foreshadowing and cliffhangers force you to find out what happens next. Thanks to selective time jumping, you can actually see a few future events and betrayals coming. Many issues end in cliffhangers (we especially liked #11's close, where a brain-washed Boy is about to put a bullet in a captured King Mob's head).

The Bad: Sometimes the book gets waaay too weird. In issue #6, King Mob and Ragged Robin avoid being killed by mind-traveling outside of reality. In #8, King Mob somehow time travels psychically to the 1920s.

And there's bizarre drug trips every now and then. All of these bits stray from the cool conspiracy stuff too much.

And even with the conspiracy stuff, there's usually so many things going on that little or none of it gets explained at all. There are no story recaps; in fact, we were originally going to review issues #11-#17, but were so lost that we had to go back to issue #1 to understand anything. Characters' abilities aren't explained; for example, how is Fanny suddenly psychic when he puts on his short-haired wig? Characters pop up for cameos that we've never seen before; is the pantsless Englishman in #14 from *Invisibles Vol. 1*? This book is NOT for the casual reader.

The Buzz: *Invisibles Vol. 2* is set to end with November's #21. Look for *Vol. 3* in '99, which will conclude the trilogy.

Skinny: Filled with wild ideas, this book is a total mind trip—so much so that it's sometimes hard to follow (but not as much as it is reputed). Even though you gotta start with issue #1 of this volume, give it a chance—you won't be disappointed.

What is this guy TALKING about? When King Mob (center) and Robin (right) travel outside of reality, Invisibles *gets very weird on us.*

Invisibles *tops even "The X-Files" in twisted conspiracies. In issue #13, the team is introduced to an audio virus you "get" by listening to a particular sound.*

THE GRADE: B+

"Japanese animation and comics (or anime and manga) have tapped into the American appetite for complex action stories and dynamic, often sexually suggestive, artwork."
–*Publishers Weekly*, June 1997

"Japanese manga are a hot item around the world today. There are manga that rival the best in literature...Japan is the first nation to give the "comic book" format such legitimacy and to test its potential on such a grand scale."
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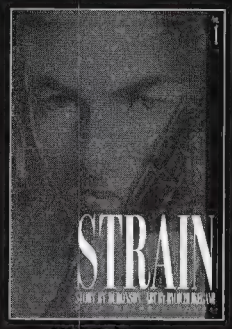
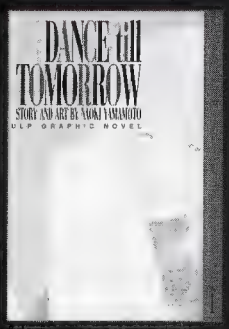


STRAIN VOL. 1
story by Buronson, art by Ryoichi Ikegami
224 pages, $16.95



DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 1
story & art by Naoki Yamamoto
216 pages, $15.95

BANANA FISH VOL. 1
story & art by Akimi Yoshida
192 pages, $15.95

October 1998

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216 pages, $15.95

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EXTRA 'ANIMERICA'

Viz delivers four fan favorites in new manga anthology

If Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee and Michael Turner made a manga anthology, it would be *Animerica Extra*.

Viz Comics is pulling out the Japanese equivalent of manga's heaviest hitters for its new monthly magazine. *Animerica Extra* weighs in at 128 pages of manga and support features. It's debuting in October with four manga series: *Video Girl Ai, Steam Detectives, Fushigi Yugi* and *X/1999*. Most of these are popular anime titles on the fan circuit, and that's the idea, according to *Animerica Extra* editor Bill Flanagan. "We want to convey to the reader that if you like the anime, you'll like the manga," he says. So, how about a tour of the new series?

• VIDEO GIRL AI One night hopelessly shy student Yota enters a mysterious video store and, stricken by the lovely visage of the girl on the cover, rents a tape titled "Video Girl Ai." When he plays the tape at home, the girl in the video spills out onto his futon—as a flesh-and-blood female! The girl Ai tells the amazed youth that she has come to him to solve his love problems, and so begins the story of a boy and his video girl.

While *Video Girl Ai* begins as a lighthearted high-school comedy, creator Masakazu Katsura soon draws readers into the world of its inhabitants, forcing them to experience the pains, as well as the joys, of growing up. Katsura's highly detailed drawings, good-girl art and top-notch storytelling have made him a fan favorite in the United States, and a popular guest at anime cons.

• STEAM DETECTIVES Sherlock Holmes meets "The Maltese Falcon" meets "Mobile Suit Gundam" in Kia Asamiya's retro-Victorian world of gaslight and clockwork machines, *film noir* and steampunk. Mighty metal monstrosities powered by steam stride across the gothic skyline of London, while masked criminal masterminds plot nefarious deeds.

And if there's a dastardly crime being perpetuated, young dashing detective Narutaki is on the case. Aided by the beautiful and talented nurse Ling Ling and her robot Goriki, Narutaki takes on rogue steam-powered robots, mad scientists, caped dark knights and, naturally enough, a *femme fatale* or two.

Steam Detectives was introduced earlier this year in Viz's *Manga Vizion* monthly manga anthology and will continue where it left off in its new digs.

• FUSHIGI YUGI All junior-high student Minaka can think about is food and passing her high-school entrance exams.

SLEEPER HOLD Minaka (bottom) may be a ditz, but she sure can pick powerful protectors.

BY PAUL SUDLOW

ANIMEPICK

ANIME FILM OF THE MONTH

Slayers: The Motion Picture

(A.D. Films, 75 minutes each, $19.98 dubbed or subtitled)

She's master mage Lina Inverse. She's greedy, vain, cute as a button and a killer fireball slinger (a good reason not to refer to her flat chest—though Lina never seems to run out of people who do).

In "Slayers: The Motion Picture" Lina teams up with her curvaceous rival/pal Nahga the Serpent to take the waters at the isolated island of Mipross, known throughout the lands for its invigorating spas and tourist resorts. But something is rotten in Mipross. Behind the fair facade of happy revelers, a horrible secret lies: a dark tale of betrayal, lost love and demonic depravity. Not that Lina much cares—until a king promises her an outrageous amount of money to solve the problem, and an old sage reveals to her a sacred pool that can...*enlarge* certain things Lina is a bit sensitive about!

A fun mix of high fantasy and wacky humor, "Slayers: The Motion Picture" is a great introduction to the whole Slayers phenomenon. Interested in seeing more? Software Sculptors has a whole slew of tapes from the "Slayers" TV show, featuring more of Lina's adventures. ■

CALAMITY QUEENS Nahga (top) and Lina (bottom) spell-blast their way into mayhem.

But when she and her best buddy Yui stumble across a mysterious book, their lives change forever. The book, *World of the Four Gods*, tells the story of a girl who gathered the Seven Seishi of Suzaku and was granted her every wish. The ancient tome promises that she who reads the book will likewise have her wishes granted. That sounds fine to Minaka (who *really* wants to pass her tests), but next thing she knows, she and Yui are transported to a strange Chinese fantasy world and accosted by slave traders!

So begins the saga of *Fushigi Yugi*, a shojo (girls') manga created by female artist Yuu Watase—a delicate blend of wacky comedy, romance, melodrama and high adventure. Follow Minaka's adventures as she becomes the priestess of a nation, determined to gather the seals of Suzaku before an enemy nation can gather its—an enemy nation led by someone very close to her.

•X/1999 CLAMP is one of the hottest shojo manga teams around, in either the United States or Japan. It has done everything from silly action adventure to melodramatic tragedies. One of its most popular series is *X/1999*, a millennial tale of the end times.

Two seers—sisters Hinoto and Kanoe—foresee the end of the world, but each desires a different outcome. A group of men and women called the Dragons of Heaven are the Seven Seals that gather around Hinoto, while the Dragons of Earth are the Seven Angels who rally around Kanoe. Residing at the center of the coming conflict is Kamui, a mysterious young man possessing awesome psionic powers.

Readers of *Animerica* are already familiar with *X/1999*. It has a new home in *Animerica Extra*, and will be picking up where it left off. For those who are keeping score, *X/1999* takes place in the same universe as *Tokyo Babylon*, another of CLAMP's manga series.

How's that for starters? *Animerica Extra* packs a lotta bang for the manga buck. Most solo manga titles—like Rumiko Takahashi's *Ranma 1/2*—run for three dollars or so, while *Animerica Extra* packs five long-running series for $4.95—about a dollar each.

Uh, five? Yep. The first issue kicks off with extra-sized chapters of the four titles described above, but there'll be another manga series along soon. "But I can't say anything about it yet," Flanagan says coyly.

Flanagan adds that, in addition to the regular series, he hopes to showcase one-shot stories by popular artists like Katsura. Viz has published many of Takahashi's one-shots under the Rumic World title, but few other manga artists have had such exposure in America. Other features in the mag include opinion columns, news from Japan and coverage of the anime versions of featured manga.

Freelance writer Paul Sudlow's had a couple of video girls fall out of his TV, but since all he can get on the tube are "Alice" and "Golden Girls" reruns, he sure wishes they'd stop.

FYI

INFO

Viz Comics' *Animerica Extra* debuts in October and retails for $4.95. Running 128 pages, it features four-to-five continuing manga series and a mixture of columns and features similar to those that run in *Animerica Extra's* sister magazine *Animerica*.

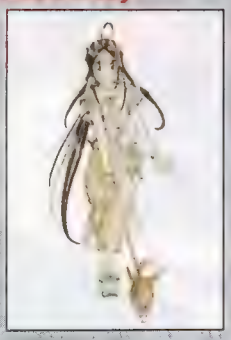
Of the titles running in *Animercia Extra*, only *Steam Detectives* hasn't been animated. The anime versions of the other four titles haven't yet been imported, but stay tuned. Manga Entertainment is bringing over the "X" movie, and Pioneer is prepping "Fushigi Yugi" for domestic release.

MANGAPICKS

MUST-READ JAPANESE COMICS SHIPPING IN SEPTEMBER

Oh My Goddess!: Sorrow, Fear Not

DARK HORSE COMICS



Once upon a time, high-school student Keiichi loved snugly li'l puppies just like everyone else—until the day he lost his own doggie in a tragic accident. Now he can't stand to have them around. Even when sis Megumi brings home a cute lost puppy that steals the hearts of the Goddesses living in Keiichi's house. Here's a short story that shows that for once in star-crossed Chateau de Keiichi, puppy love can actually involve, well, a puppy. Adorable, huh? $3.95

Ranma 1/2 Part Seven, #8

VIZ COMICS

Once upon a time, young gender-bender Ranma lost his shirt (and pants) to the Gambling King. Now the lord of cards is back in answer to a childish challenge Ranma sent years ago, and he's more trouble than an army of unicycle-riding cherubs. Ranma lost bad in their last encounter and he isn't much better at cards now. Of course, if money is involved, so is Ranma's future sister-in-law, Nibiki Tendo, and that changes everything.... $2.95

Hyper Dolls #2

IRONCAT STUDIOS

Having lost the giant space bug that's been trashing Tokyo (it's probably hiding in Madison Square Garden), the alien android gals Maika and Miyu decide to go to ground and blend in with their surroundings to wait it out. Do they disguise themselves as librarians or bus drivers? Nah! Try cute schoolgirls! Of course, school life brings on complications all its own. $2.95

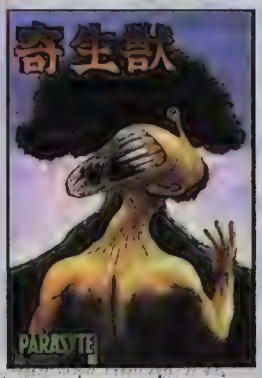
Dance Till Tomorrow Vol. 1 graphic novel

VIZ COMICS

University student Suekichi is perfectly content to pursue his goals of squeaking through college, delivering the goods for his theater troupe and pining after its lovely boss, Miss Shimomura. That is, until the day he is left with a 450 million yen inheritance—on the condition he can graduate and get married. That condition becomes both easier and more difficult to fulfill with the arrival of sexy Aya, a mysterious woman determined to seduce him. Is she after his money? Will Suekichi win the heart of Miss Shimomura or fall for Aya? For mature readers only. $15.95

Mixxzine Vol. 2 #2

MIXX PUBLICATIONS



The Mixx madness continues with another round of manga: shojo comics *Sailor Moon* and *Magic Knight Rayearth* and shonen (boys') comics *Ice Blade*, *Harlem Beat* and *Parasyte*. This issue also features exclusive coverage of Sailor Moon creator Naoko Takeuchi's adventures during San Diego ComicCon 1998. *Mixxzine* is a curious mix of cutie-pie girl's comics and guts-spewing men's comics, but—like upcoming *Animerica Extra*—it's lotsa manga bang for the buck. For mature readers only. $4.99

Star Wars: A New Hope—Manga #3

DARK HORSE COMICS

The "Star Wars" saga, according to artist Hisao Tamaki, continues in the third installment of Dark Horse's *A New Hope* manga. Luke, Leia, Han and Chewie are rampaging through the halls of the Death Star while Obi-wan Kenobi squares off with the Dark Lord of the Sith, Darth Vader, in a no-holds-barred duel—rendered in a dramatic kendo-style ballet of death that puts a whole new spin on this dramatic scene first seen in the film. $9.95

Banana Fish Vol. 1 graphic novel

VIZ COMICS

It's the women's comic that reads like a men's comic! A mysterious drug and the cryptic phrase "Banana Fish" are the threads that draw Vietnam vet-turned-Big Apple gangster Ash Lynx into a web of intrigue involving the Mafia and the U.S. government. The long-running saga *Banana Fish* was extremely popular with both male and female readers in Japan thanks to its action, involved plots and sudden twists. It's just starting here in the United States, so now's a good time to get on board. For mature readers only. $15.95 ■

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH by Lars Pearson

MARKET WATCH

MARVEL vs. DC, VOL. 2

Who's the No. 1 publisher these days?

It's like watching Flash race Quicksilver. Marvel Comics has long been the largest comic book publisher in America; its reputation is built on this fact. But for many months now, DC Comics has been nipping at Marvel's heels, usually trailing in direct-market sales by a mere 1 to 3 percent.

In July, DC went over the hump, beating Marvel in number of copies sold. Granted, DC won by a razor-thin margin of less than 1 percent, but win it did. DC's Tangent books, a line of nine titles above and beyond the regular line, boosted the company's sales that month, but one fact remains: This race remains very, very close.

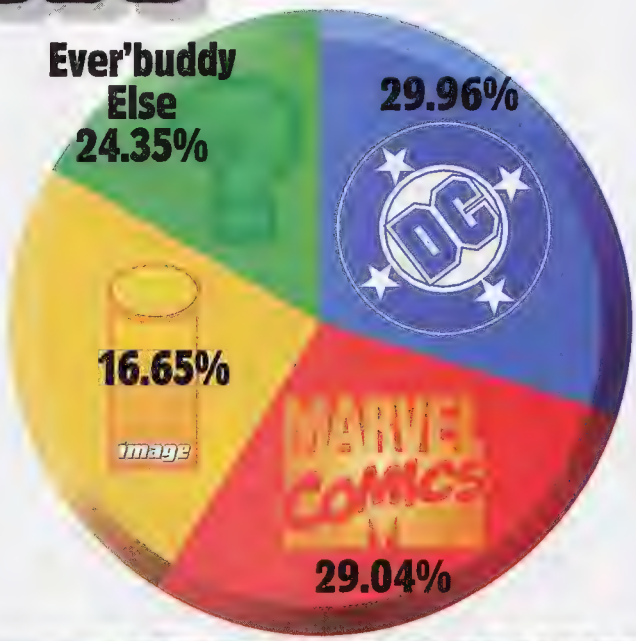


PHOTO FINISH DC wins the sales race in July by a nose. (Source: Diamond Comic Distributors)

Ironically, neither company claims any real benefit to being king of the hill. DC director of sales Bob Wayne says that despite the July win, "If somebody else puts out a good batch of books, it's not going to bother us if we're No. 2 that month. However, it would bother us if we're No. 2 until the end of time." Conversely, Marvel Comics executive veep for publishing Shirrel Rhodes says he isn't sweating. "If for one month DC has a bigger slice of the pie, then geez, they gotta luck out some time."

Yet Marvel used to be the consistent 500-pound gorilla, the company by which all others measured themselves. Some retailers theorize DC's gains are due to a more loyal following, that books such as *Starman*, *Green Lantern* and *Nightwing* enjoy fixed readerships while such Marvel books as *Heroes for Hire* or *Alpha Flight* might get spontaneously dropped. Rhodes isn't sure he agrees with that theory. "The DC titles you're talking about, while they may have a loyal base of readers, are not big-selling titles. Marvel generally dominates the top 50 comic books sold and has even bigger followings, even if some readers come and go."

At the same time, DC has *often* beaten Marvel in 1998 for monthly dollar sales, boosted by its $4.95 "Prestige Format" books. Wayne says comics such as *JLA: The Nail* are part of DC's diversity. "It means we're providing people with choices such as $1.99 entry-level comics like *JLA* or a $4.95 book like *Superman For All Seasons*."

Rhodes favors value for money, pointing out, "If we sell more units, but they have more dollars, then obviously DC has higher prices than Marvel. I don't feel embarrassed by the fact that Marvel is giving a better value."

That might be true, but if voting by dollars among fans counts for anything, then the kingship of the comic industry is in hot competition. Though Marvel will probably enjoy the top position for some time, one thing is certain: When it comes to comic sales, the race ain't over yet.

CHICAGO CON QUAKES

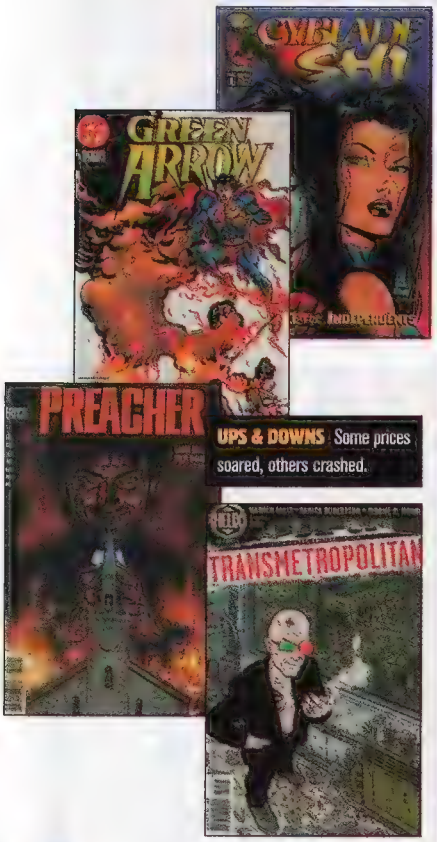
Conventions are huge events, with fans racing from table to table desperately trying to find much-needed books. As a result, prices can change hourly, but the trading still mirrors trends happening across the nation. Here are some highlights from the retail floor at Wizard World '98 in Chicago. You'll see some changes in this month's price guide, too:

▲ **Cliffhanger Chromiums**—Limited to 5,000 copies, the *Battle Chasers* and *Danger Girl* Chromium covers finally popped in price, easily doubling over the weekend. *Danger Girl* held the lead, selling for $115 compared to *Battle Chasers*' $95. That the *Crimson* Chromium was only trading at $20 didn't negate a big win for Cliffhanger.

▼ **Cyblade/Shi**—Witchblade fans don't pay Witchy's first

appearance much notice, since it's an out-of-continuity story. Also, many copies lie about, so *Cyblade/Shi* slipped again, and is now less than a third of *Witchblade* #1's value.

▲ **Green Arrow**—As breathless fans wonder if DC is gonna resurrect Oliver Queen, they're taking aim at the issue where he allegedly croaked: *Green Arrow* #101. It's now going in the $8 to $10 range, while endless recent crossovers have boosted the visibility of this low-printed series.



UPS & DOWNS Some prices soared, others crashed.

▼ **Preacher**—Going by last month's price guide, *Preacher* #1-#7 would have cost you $169, and even the most religious of *Preacher* fans realize the *Preacher: Gone to Texas* paperback reprints those issues for a mere $15. So in another example of how reprints can slow the back-issue market, preacher Jesse Custer falls from grace.

▲ **Nightwing, Thunderbolts, Transmetropolitan**—These series have little in common, save for repeated fan praise that's made their premiere issues double in price. *Nightwing* #1 is arguably the most popular, but *Transmetropolitan* #1 easily had the smallest print run of the bunch, so they both go in the $16 to $20 range. *Thunderbolts* #1 listed as high as $15 and gaining fast.

PHOTOS: BACHALO, BUSIEK, KELLY, SMITH, DAVID, ADAM KUBERT, LEE, MADUREIRA, MILLER, ROSS, TURNER, QUAD BY PAUL SCHRADE, MORRISON BY BOB MARTIN, ANDY KUBERT BY C. BLANKENHORN, PEREZ BY BOB SMITH, SEAGLE COURTESY OF STEVEN SEAGLE. IMAGE BY JOSEPH SCHLITER

TOP 10 CREATORS

FAN FAVORITES

These are the creators the fans crave. Creators whose name on a cover sells the book. *Wizard*'s Top Ten Creators lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey. Artists include pencilers and painters.

WRITERS

1. Kurt Busiek
Astro City, Avengers

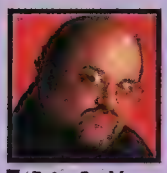
2. Mark Waid
Captain America, JLA: Year One

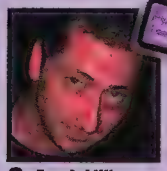
3. Joe Kelly
Deadpool, X-Men

4. Grant Morrison
JLA, The Invisibles

5. Garth Ennis
Preacher, Hitman

6. Steven T. Seagle
Uncanny X-Men, Alpha Flight

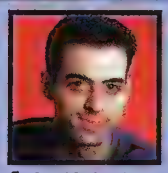

7. Peter David
Supergirl


8. Frank Miller
300

9. Kevin Smith
Clerks, Daredevil

10. Ron Marz
Green Lantern

ARTISTS


1. Joe Madureira
Battle Chasers

2. Michael Turner
Fathom

3. Jim Lee
Divine Right

4. J. Scott Campbell
Danger Girl

5. Alex Ross
upcoming: *Superman: PoE*

6. Andy Kubert
Captain America

7. Chris Bachalo
Uncanny X-Men

8. George Pérez
Avengers

9. Adam Kubert
X-Men

10. John Romita Jr.
Thor, P.P.: Spider-Man

BURIED TREASURE

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THIS

WHAT IF...? (VOL. 2) #105

Yikes! Looks like Spidey was serious about that operation! Actually, the curvy arachnid here is Spider-*Girl*, Peter Parker's Alterniverse daughter. And she–along with the descendants of the Avengers–are introduced in this little *What If...?* story about Green Goblins and basketball.

Thing is, Marvel's new MC2 line, featuring these sons and daughters of prominent Marvel characters, can be traced back to this one single issue. Now if MC2 takes off, then this low-printed *What If...?* story will surely follow suit. And at about $2 a copy, it's definitely worth a try. ■ LP

DEITY ASCENDS

Few people had heard of *Deity* when it premiered in September 1997. Heck, few had heard of Hyperwerks, the company that publishes it (and recently merged with Awesome). But cool art and positive word-of-mouth has ignited this futuristic series featuring a teen-age girl named Jamie in constant struggle with both the warlike Ma'Shiva and the powers she doesn't fully understand. Prices are on the rise and interest should only pick up as the initial six-issue mini-series is joined by a new ongoing this September.

Few people had heard of Wizard *Price Guide manager Lars Pearson until that incident with the rutabagas and the howler monkeys. Now everyone wants a piece of him!*

MOUTHING OFF Good word of mouth helped the fledgling *Deity*.

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Stuart Wagner
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Springfield, MO 65804
(417) 882-2283

Robert Scott
Comickaze Comics
& Sportscards
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San Diego, CA 92111
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Nolan Wyatt
Golden Apple Comics
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Los Angeles, CA 90046
(213) 658-6047

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TOP 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 BATTLE CHASERS #1

WRITERS: J. Madureira and M. Sharrieff
ARTISTS: J. Madureira and T. McWeeney

It's *déjà vu* all over again: *Battle Chasers* #1 is in the leadoff hole for the third straight month. Why? Well, this Madureira cat is the most popular artist since Michelangelo. If Joe Mad drew Cheerios boxes, you'd be buyin' multiples. And there's a damn good story that goes along with all them pretty pictures, so this Munier Sharrieff guy–whom we think played a bit part in "Lawrence of Arabia"–is pullin' his weight, too. You go, guys! **LAST MONTH: 1**

2 DANGER GIRL #1

WRITERS: J. Scott Campbell and A. Hartnell
ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and A. Garner

What's good for the guys is good for the girlies. *Danger Girl* #1 is another tasty breakfast treat, and if this J. Scott Campbell guy drew Shredded Wheat boxes, you'd be up to your armpits in both the frosted side and the wheat side. The thing *Battle Chasers* and *Danger Girl* have in common? Other than the fact you'd walk a mile over broken glass to have them? They're by the same publisher. It's a Cliffhanger world, baby. We're just living in it. **LAST MONTH: 5**

3 THOR #1 (VOL. 2)

WRITER: Dan Jurgens
ARTISTS: John Romita Jr. and Klaus Janson

Verily! Forsooth! Okay, enough. No more Asgard-speak. Let's just say that it's been a durned long time (try 22 months) since Thor's had his own book, and the current title kicks so much ass, you'll wanna grow long blond hair and carry a hammer around. And you'll even think you look cool. **LAST MONTH: 3**

4 300 #1

WRITER: Frank Miller
ARTISTS: Frank Miller and Lynn Varley

If Frank Miller builds it, they will come. Who'da thunk Greek history was so friggin' cool? Not Mr. Twombley from 10th grade social studies. Boy, that guy was an ass. But this tale of 300 Spartans who took on the entire Persian army is good readin'. Who'da thunk it? Apparently, Miller did. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**

5 KISS: THE PSYCHO CIRCUS #1

WRITER: Brian Holguin
ARTISTS: Angel Medina and Kevin Conrad

Two life choices: Go to school, work hard, get a job and retire at 65 with a cheap watch. Or...rock and roll all night, party every day, paint your face, drink grain alcohol and run with loose women on four continents. Like KISS. Kids, go tell mom you just made an important career decision. **LAST MONTH: 4**

6 JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

What's the appeal of *JLA*? Big storylines–the team's always fighting Darkseid or Heaven or something. Big lineup–there's 14 or so members, providing readers with the best DC smorgasbord they're gonna find. And Big Barda–She's that amazon-type chick JLA member who'll kick your ass if ya don't read the book. **LAST MONTH: 7**

7 CLERKS #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTIST: Jim Mahfood

Kevin Smith is the scripting version of Joe Madureira. When he writes something, people go ga-ga. Smith could write *Sonic Disrupters*, *Barbie Fashion* or *Kickers, Inc.* and they'd be on this list. Give him Dante and Randal in *Clerks*, and the thing sells like ice water in the Sahara. **LAST MONTH: 6**

8 GREEN LANTERN #100

WRITER: Ron Marz
ARTISTS: Darryl Banks and Terry Austin

Hal Jordan: The old guard. Kyle Rayner: The young gun. Both Green Lanterns come together here, and yer average geek-on-the-street is *crazed* with anticipation, waiting to see who's better. We think they should just strip to the waist and wrestle in cinders. Get Catwoman as the special guest referee and we're there! **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

9 DIVINE RIGHT #1

WRITER: Jim Lee
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

Technically, this book's title is *Divine Right: The Adventures of Max Faraday*. The only longer title we could find is "The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension," a 1984 movie starring Peter Weller. And a Ford Fiesta. *Divine Right* stars Max Faraday. And a pizza. We'll take Max and pepperoni, please. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

10 STARMAN #0

WRITER: James Robinson
ARTISTS: T. Harris and W. von Grawbadger

So anyhoo, every month without fail, just a *few* more people turn on to the super-cool tale of Jack Knight, this generation's Starman. But where to start reading? Well, maybe where it all begins: Right here in 1994's *Starman* #0. Seem good to you? Okay. It's a deal. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

THE HIGHEST-ORDERED BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF **JULY**

TOP100

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors.

Alternate interiors! They're here. *Fathom #1* comes with three different three-page interlude scenes.

1. Fathom #1 (Top Cow/Image)
2. Uncanny X-Men #359 (Marvel)
3. X-Men #79 (Marvel)
4. Witchblade #25 (Top Cow/Image)
5. Spawn #76 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
6. Avengers #8 (Marvel)
7. Wolverine #128 (Marvel)
8. JLA #22 (DC)
9. Danger Girl #4 (Cliffhanger/Image)
10. Fantastic Four #9 (Marvel)
11. Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty #1 (Marvel)
12. Captain America #9 (Marvel)
13. Iron Man #8 (Marvel)
14. Thor #3 (Marvel)
15. Darkness #17 (Top Cow/Image)
16. Marvel Annual '98: X-Men & Fantastic Four (Marvel)
17. Curse of the Spawn #23 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
18. Amazing Spider-Man #438 (Marvel)
19. Amazing Spider-Man #439 (Marvel)
20. JLA: Year One #9 (DC)
21. Generation X #42 (Marvel)
22. Marvel Annual '98: Avengers & Squadron Supreme (Marvel)
23. X-Men Unlimited #20 (Marvel)
24. Young Justice #1 (DC)
25. Rampaging Hulk #2 (Marvel)
26. Crimson #3 (Cliffhanger/Image)
27. X-Force #81 (Marvel)
28. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #95 (Marvel)
29. Incredible Hulk #468 (Marvel)
30. X-Factor #149 (Marvel)
31. Justice League of America: The Nail #2 (DC)
32. Spectacular Spider-Man #261 (Marvel)
33. X-Man #42 (Marvel)
34. Tales of the Darkness #3 (Top Cow/Image)
35. Cable #58 (Marvel)
36. Sensational Spider-Man #31 (Marvel)
37. Spirit of the Tao #3 (Top Cow/Image)
38. Green Lantern #103 (DC)
39. Green Lantern #104 (DC)
40. Superman #138 (DC)
41. JLA: World Without Grown-Ups #2 (DC)
42. Action Comics #748 (DC)
43. Adventures of Superman #561 (DC)
44. Superman: The Man of Steel #83 (DC)
45. Gen^{13} #31 (WildStorm/Image)
46. Batman #558 (DC)
47. Superman For All Seasons #1 (DC)
48. Tangent '98—JLA #1 (DC)
49. Excalibur #124 (Marvel)
50. Thunderbolts #18 (Marvel)
51. Detective Comics #725 (DC)
52. Nightwing #24 (DC)
53. Tangent '98—Batman #1 (DC)
54. Tangent '98—Superman #1 (DC)
55. Preacher #41 (Vertigo/DC)
56. 300 #3 (Dark Horse)
57. Tangent '98—Tales of the Green Lantern #1 (DC)
58. Deadpool #20 (Marvel)
59. Flash #141 (DC)
60. Alpha Flight #14 (Marvel)
61. Gen^{13}/Monkeyman & O'Brien #2 (WildStorm/Image)
62. Batman Annual #22 (DC)
63. Tangent '98—Joker's Wild #1 (DC)
64. Darkminds #1 (Image)
65. Tangent '98—Nightwing: Night Force #1 (DC)
66. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #78 (DC)
67. Tenth #11 (Image)
68. Tangent '98—Trials of the Flash #1 (DC)
69. Tangent '98—Wonder Woman #1 (DC)
70. Robin #57 (DC)
71. Catwoman #61 (DC)
72. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #110 (DC)
73. Supergirl #25 (DC)
74. Wonder Woman #137 (DC)
75. Green Arrow #136 (DC)
76. Tangent '98—Power Girl #1 (DC)
77. Lady Death #7 (Chaos!)
78. Iron Man: The Iron Age #2 (Marvel)
79. Jim Lee's C•23 #4 (WildStorm/Image)
80. Flash Annual #11 (DC)
81. Legends of the DC Universe #8 (DC)
82. Jay & Silent Bob #2 (Oni Press)
83. Star Wars: The Last Command #6 (DC)
84. Catwoman/Wildcat #2 (DC)
85. Lady Death: Retribution (Chaos!)
86. Xena: Warrior Princess—Wedding of Xena & Hercules (Topps)
87. Star Wars: T.O.T.J.—Redemption of Ulic Qel-Droma #1 (D.H.)
88. Heroes for Hire #15 (Marvel)
89. Sunfire & Big Hero Six #1 (Marvel)
90. Starman #46 (DC)
91. Legends of the DC Universe 80-Page Giant #1 (DC)
92. Mage: The Hero Defined #10 (Image)
93. Tenth Configuration #1 (Image)
94. Wonder Woman Annual #7 (DC)
95. Silver Surfer #143 (Marvel)
96. Marvel Universe #4 (Marvel)
97. Teen Titans #24 (DC)
98. Xena: Warrior Princess—Original Olympics #2 (Topps)
99. Star Wars: X-Wing R.S.—Mandatory Retirement #1 (D.H.)
100. Aquaman #48 (DC)

TOP 100 HIGHLIGHTS

TOP COW TOPS OFF!

Fathom #1 and Witchblade #25 (Nos. 1, 4)

According to the Chinese calendar, July is the month of the cow–Top Cow, that is. Not only did Top Cow milk out a win (ouch!) with *Witchblade* #25, an anniversary issue and the last for artist Michael Turner, but the debut of Turner's *Fathom* swamped the opposition. *Fathom* initially sold 253,000 copies in the direct market–twice as many as No. 2 *Uncanny X-Men*! And with advance reorders, *Fathom* sold 290,000, easily making it the top-selling book to date this year.

Young Justice #1 and JLA: World Without Grown-Ups #2 (Nos. 24, 41)

With a lineup containing Superboy, Robin and Impulse, these team books probably would sell well anyway. But add in writer Peter David (*Supergirl*), and *Young Justice* comes out a *huge* seller. David undoubtedly carried over many of his fans who were crying in their beer after his recent departures from *Incredible Hulk* and *Aquaman*.

Rampaging Hulk #2 (No. 25)

It's a sales gimmick, and yes, we're all biting on it. Marvel's "Two For Two" program–automatically putting two covers on #2 issues of an ongoing series–seems to have worked. *Rampaging* dropped only two places from its debut last month and actually outsold the core *Incredible Hulk* title.

Superman For All Seasons #1 (No. 47)

Supes is flying prouder than you think here. Believing that orders were too low, DC shipped extra copies into the marketplace. Many retailers report that without the overship, they would have sold out. With the overship, they made extra sales, and *Superman For All Seasons*' ranking should actually be higher as a result.

Tangent books (Nos. 48, 53, 54, 57, 63, 65, 68, 69, 76)

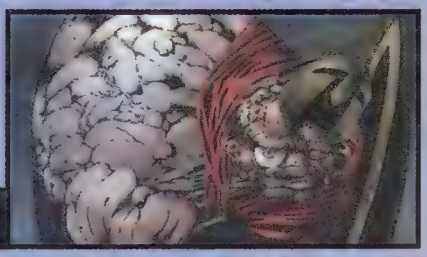
With Tangent, talent went out the window. By that, we mean that orders didn't go according to which creator was on which book–character recognition ruled the day here. So the Tangent book with those three magic letters (Say it with us: "J-L-A"!) placed highest, followed by Batman and Superman. Power Girl (who?) brought up the rear.

Lady Death #7 (No. 77)

On a chart weighted down with nine Tangent books, and in a month with *two* Lady Death products (see No. 85), the fact that *Lady Death* hung onto No. 77 is a tribute to the fan base it's built. In a market never lacking for *femmes fatale*, this pasty-skinned, buxom beauty just won't stay in the grave.

CLOSE-UP LOOK

Break it on down now! Here's a look at the top-selling books in a couple of categories, with their overall Diamond Comic Distributors "Top 300" rankings in parentheses.



WINNER'S CIRCLE Frank Miller's *300* was the winning 'Horse this month.

TOP 10 DARK HORSE COMICS

1. 300 #3 (No. 57)
2. Star Wars: The Last Command #6 (No. 83)
3. Star Wars: T.O.T.J.—Redemption of Ulic Qel-Droma #1 (No. 87)
4. Star Wars: X-Wing R.S.—Mandatory Retirement #1 (No. 99)
5. Star Wars Handbook: X-Wing R.S. #1 (No. 115)
6. Aliens vs. Predator: Eternal #2 (No. 138)
7. Curse of Dracula #1 (No. 150)
8. Madman: The Jam #1 (No. 155)
9. Aliens: Wraith (No. 160)
10. Sergio Aragonés' Boogeyman #2 (No. 165)

TOP 10 UNDEAD-CHARACTER COMICS

1. Spawn #76 (Todd McFarlane/Image, No. 5)
2. Curse of the Spawn #23 (Todd McFarlane/Image, No. 17)
3. Crimson #3 (Cliffhanger/Image, No. 26)
4. Lady Death #7 (Chaos!, No. 77)
5. Lady Death: Retribution (Chaos!, No. 85)
6. Resurrection Man #17 (DC, No. 124)
7. Evil Ernie #2 (Chaos!, No. 131)
8. Dead King #4 (Chaos!, No. 170)
9. Dead Corps(e) #1 (Helix/DC, No. 180)
10. Zombieworld: Winter's Dregs #3 (Dark Horse, No. 211)

LOOKING BACK

What topped the charts FIVE YEARS AGO?

1. Wolverine #75 (Marvel)
2. Spawn #16 (Image)
3. X-Men #26 (Marvel)
4. Prophet #1 (Image)
5. X-Men 2099 #2 (Marvel)
6. Uncanny X-Men #306 (Marvel)
7. Team Youngblood #1 (Image)
8. Batman #501 (DC)
9. Venom: The Madness #2 (Marvel)
10. Detective Comics #668 (DC)

PROPHET-IBLE? Well, maybe #1 sold well. But it went downhill quickly after that.

Prophet? Yep, the No. 4 book five years ago starred an ex-government agent with big knives whose father was a religious leader, hence the name "Prophet." And no, the title wasn't explained any more beyond that. Despite a strong start, *Prophet* sputtered due to missed shipping dates until it was mercifully canceled. Today, #1 is so worthless that Hari Krishnas won't even pass it out in airports.

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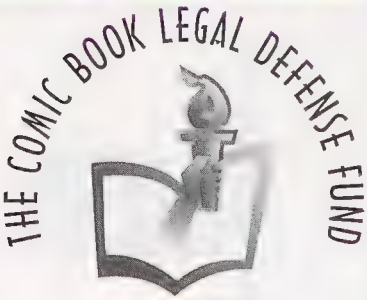

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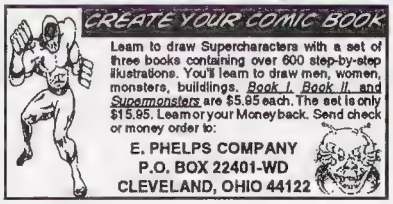

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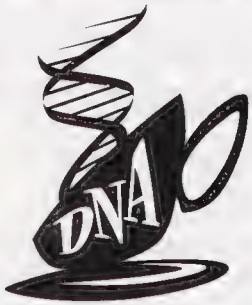

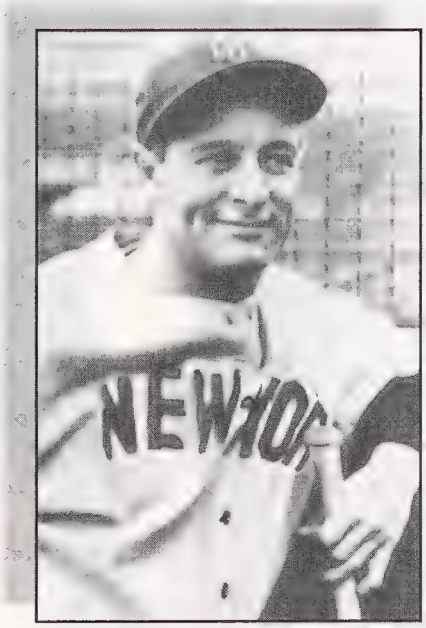

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C.B.I.Q.

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART...

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Bring a bat! Welcome to yet another installment of the ever-effervescent *Wizard* CBIQ, where this month we'll be grading your comic knowledge against cutsey sidekicks who ruined otherwise entertaining cartoons. The higher your score, the stronger the irritant. Ready?

SCORE	RANK
0-4	*Gleek, space-monkey pal of the "Super Friends." Like Zan wouldn't have offed this eyesore after like the 300th time he scared him.*
5-9	*The "X-Men"'s Jubilee. STOP WHINING!*
10-14	*Orko, the legless imp from "He-Man." "Whoops, Orko's magic screwed up Prince Adam again!" Somebody light him on fire.*
15	*"Spider-Man and his Amazing Friends" Ms. Lion. The Spider-Dog. With berets.*

1 In the ever-wacky *Batman: The Long Halloween*, the Caped Crusader took a whole damn year to find a killer known only as:
a) Jack o' Lantern
b) Holiday
c) Scarecrow
d) "Halloween III: Season of the Witch." Unsuspecting moviegoers exposed to this chunk of vomit killed themselves to escape the pain.

2 Daredevil's one-time lady love, the assassin Elektra, was killed by:
a) Kingpin
b) Electro
c) Bullseye
d) Ol' Hornhead himself

3 Donna Troy, the one-time Wonder Girl, has also gone by the following super-identity, among others:
a) Darkstar
b) Demigoddess
c) Cheetah
d) Mighty Aphrodite

4 Cerebus is one tough customer—and durable, too. He's starred in 200-plus issues of a comic called...well, Cerebus. Not bad for a...
a) ...hedgehog.
b) ...aardvark.
c) ...porcupine.
d) ...two-headed canine.

5 In the "Return of Barry Allen" story arc in *The Flash*, Barry turned out to be:
a) Max Mercury, totally bonkers
b) Professor Zoom, totally bonkers
c) Wally West, totally bonkers
d) A time-displaced Hal Jordan

6 Ranma Saotome, star of Viz Comics' *Ranma 1/2*, hates them public pools. See, when he's splashed with cold water, he turns into...
a) ...a panda.
b) ...a hot babe.
c) ...a pot-bellied pig.
d) ...Jim McLauchlin, blasted on Heineken and screaming epithets at French tourists.

7 Besides teaming up with *Wizard* on a record 214 covers, the berserker mutant Wolverine has teamed up with all but the following heroes:
a) The Teen Titans
b) Witchblade
c) Micronauts
d) Um...Strawberry Shortcake? Man alive, that hairy mutie's appeared in a lotta crossovers.

8 Nice costume, Tick, but what exactly do those stupid antennae do? Well, once, when deprived of his buggy adornments, the Tick...
a) ...kept losing his balance.
b) ...couldn't stop eating animal crackers.
c) ...kept getting hit with falling pianos.
d) ...got canceled by Fox Kids

9 In the upcoming X-related title from Marvel, *Mutant X*, which genetically gifted hero gets shunted to an alternate dimension?
a) Havok
b) Wolverine
c) X-Man
d) Another alternate dimension? Time for some new ideas, everybody.

10 Which reject from the zoological gardens hasn't fought Spider-Man yet?
a) The Kangaroo
b) The Grizzly
c) The Shark
d) Kid N.A.M.B.L.A.

11 Back when ninjas weren't just cannon fodder any schoolgirl with a sturdy rake could defeat, it was revealed in the pages of *G.I. Joe* that Storm Shadow had in fact been framed for the murder of:
a) The Hard Master
b) The Soft Master
c) The Dark Master
d) David Carradine's career

12 What's the name of the main male character in the mega-popular anime and manga "Dragonball Z"?
a) Zippy
b) Goku
c) Toriyama
d) Carl

13 What comic contained Stan Lee's first published work?
a) *Fantastic Four* #1
b) *Amazing Fantasy* #15
c) *Captain America Comics* #3
d) *Bondage Biker Babes* #2

14 In addition to every stinkin' issue of *Catwoman* you ever saw, what Chaos! Comics mini-series did Jim Balent pencil?
a) *Lady Death: Between Heaven and Hell*
b) *Evil Ernie: Destroyer*
c) *Chastity: Theater of Pain*
d) *Purgatori: The Vampire's Myth*

15 The Savage Dragon, before he went and got himself killed, once headed up which superhero organization?
a) S.O.S. (Special Operations Strikeforce)
b) S.H.I.E.L.D. (Strategic Headquarters International Espionage Law-enforcement Division)
c) J.L.E. (Justice League Europe)
d) Y.O. M.A.M.A. (Yuppies Organized Merely Against Major Assets, of course)

ANSWERS

Candy-asses can peek on the next page if this is too tough...

BULLPEN LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Mazel Tov!

Another *Wizard* bachelor falls prey to feminine wiles as managing editor Andrew Kardon and Allison Thau (who dated for—brace yourself—SEVEN AND A HALF YEARS!!) finally tied the knot June 28, 1998. As the 200-plus capacity crowd nervously awaited some manner of supervillain attack, anxiety turned to teary applause when the two exchanged vows, stepped on a wine glass (some Jewish tradition thing) and then swapped spit (and no, the Masters of Evil never showed up). The best part of the evening? Well, besides the beautiful ceremony, lifting the bride and groom in chairs and dancing around, the killer band, the non-stop dancing and monster food, the high point came in the shape of a 3-foot high Captain America ice sculpture, a surprise gift from the couple's parents to the groom, the world's No. 1 Cap fan. "It was easily the happiest day of my life," Andrew said, "although it happened so fast I hardly remember any of it. And, unfortunately, the Avengers weren't around this time to save Cap."

SHORT, COOL ONE Behind every new happily married couple should be a 3-foot Cap ice sculpture.

TOP 10 rejected plots to "end the Spidey saga":

10 Score with super-model wife or fight crime. Hmmm…"The End."
9 Spidey enjoys a hearty lunch at the beach with his amazing friends Firestar and Iceman, doesn't wait the recommended hour before going swimming, gets cramps, drowns.
8 John Byrne's massive ego momentarily loses its balance, teeters for a few seconds, then falls and crushes Spider-Man.
7 Trashcan Man drives a nuke into Peter's apartment and the whole thing goes blooey.
6 Spider-Man goes to France and the country immediately surrenders; a puppet-regime is set up with the Fabulous Frog-Man "in charge."
5 He's thrown down a smokestack never to return. Well, maybe not never….
4 Professor X goes crazy and Spidey dies trying to stop him. Nah. Who'd buy that?
3 Uncle Ben revealed to be alive! Peter realizes he no longer has any responsibility, buys an N64 and retires.
2 Spidey's killed on the Brooklyn Bridge, but back at Madison Square Garden a new Spidey breaks out of an egg and…ah, forget it. Nobody'll like this crap.
1 Steve Ditko and Stan Lee return for final issue: Peter enters wheatcake-eating contest, Flash Thompson calls him a "wallflower" and Gwen Stacey's animated corpse returns with a flame-thrower strapped to her back. Ends with a big dance number. Stan's crazy.

CBIQ answers...

1. B	4. B	7. D	10. C	13. C
2. C	5. B	8. A	11. A	14. D
3. A	6. B	9. A	12. B	15. A

ONE OF THE DAMNED

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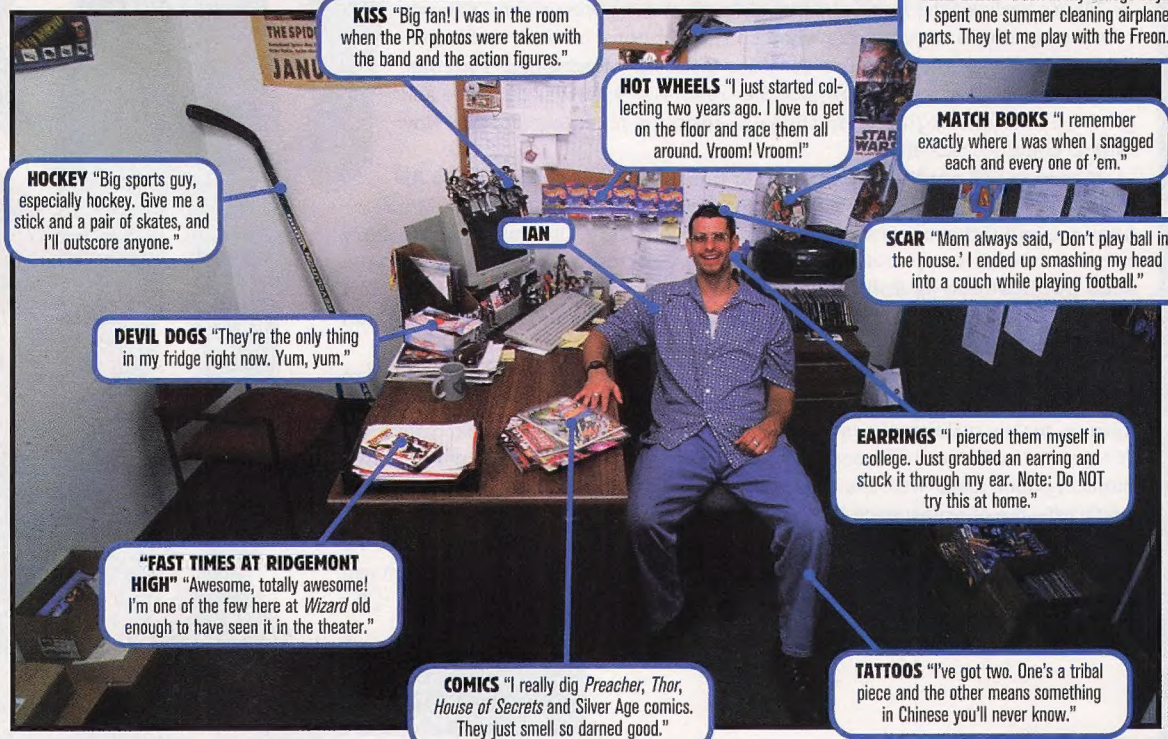
Ian M. Feller PROMOTIONS MANAGER

WHY WE PAY HIM: "I handle all the contests, 1/2 offers and inserts that go in the polybag for *Wizard* and the *Wizard* specials. And I participate in all the after-school activities."

BEST OUT-OF-CONTEXT QUOTE: "I got the hump on the way to the airport." (In reference to sitting between two others in the back of senior staff writer Jim McLauchlin's car.)

MOST BIZARRE WIZARD MOMENT: "I was sitting at my desk talking to two co-workers when all of a sudden—BOOM! I was lying on the ground. Somehow the chair fell out from underneath me. I still haven't lived it down."



KISS "Big fan! I was in the room when the PR photos were taken with the band and the action figures."

AIRPLANE "Back in my college days, I spent one summer cleaning airplane parts. They let me play with the Freon."

HOT WHEELS "I just started collecting two years ago. I love to get on the floor and race them all around. Vroom! Vroom!"

MATCH BOOKS "I remember exactly where I was when I snagged each and every one of 'em."

HOCKEY "Big sports guy, especially hockey. Give me a stick and a pair of skates, and I'll outscore anyone."

SCAR "Mom always said, 'Don't play ball in the house.' I ended up smashing my head into a couch while playing football."

DEVIL DOGS "They're the only thing in my fridge right now. Yum, yum."

EARRINGS "I pierced them myself in college. Just grabbed an earring and stuck it through my ear. Note: Do NOT try this at home."

"FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH" "Awesome, totally awesome! I'm one of the few here at *Wizard* old enough to have seen it in the theater."

COMICS "I really dig *Preacher*, *Thor*, *House of Secrets* and Silver Age comics. They just smell so darned good."

TATTOOS "I've got two. One's a tribal piece and the other means something in Chinese you'll never know."

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHEGALDI

TIME TRAVEL

by PATRICK SAURIOL

'MANHATTAN' PROJECT

Moore and Gibbons blew up comics with the debut of their landmark mini-series, 'Watchmen,' 12 years ago

It's the greatest comics story ever told. When published in 1986, DC's revolutionary mini-series *Watchmen* took comics up a notch. It deconstructed traditional superheroes, presenting them as complex individuals in an elaborate society where their decisions had profound consequences. In short, *Watchmen* proved comics could offer drama.

In the mid-'80s, superheroes lived in sterile universes; the uncertainties and horrors of real life never trespassed into the panels of a comic. Wanting to shake things up, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons envisioned a book where the characters and world they existed in could be ambiguous. "Our idea was to do a variant take on the superhero," Moore explains. "What would happen if you took their world and applied real-world values to it? The idea of seeing that enthralled me."

Watchmen took place in a world on the brink of nuclear war, where costumed champions were outlawed. When an unsavory government agent called the Comedian was murdered, several heroes reunited to unravel a conspiracy that eventually placed the fate of the planet in their hands. Originally, Moore and Gibbons planned to use the Charlton Comics superheroes DC had acquired, since "there might be a bunch of characters people cared so little about me and Dave could have fun with," Moore recalls. When DC decided it wanted those characters for other books, Moore and Gibbons created new characters in the same vein, including the nigh-omnipotent Dr. Manhattan, the indecisive hero Nite Owl and the tragically psychotic Rorschach.

Moore realized the book's potential for shattering pre-existing notions of what superhero comics were when he saw Gibbons' artwork and layout for issue one. "It forced you to consider different possibilities. Together we could take *Watchmen* far beyond the confines of what was out there and give it a different degree of emotional realism for superhero comics. How radical could we take this?"

Moore found out the answer to that question when he submitted his script for *Watchmen* #6. Receiving "complete, dead, stony silence," Moore finally asked if there were problems. On the contrary, the impact of the story had left his editor speechless. *Watchmen* received further accolades from such publications as *Rolling Stone*, and helped boost the industry to new heights. Moore had always sought dignity for comics, and he was delighted with the publicity.

That victory did not come without side effects. *Watchmen* shares the burden for today's darker and grittier comics. "[*Watchmen*] is responsible, to some degree, for the malaise of comic books in general today," Moore acknowledges. "Sometime in the mid-'80s comics achieved the goal they wanted and now [the industry] finds itself without a direction. It's like someone left the top of the soda bottle off—the effervescence has gone."

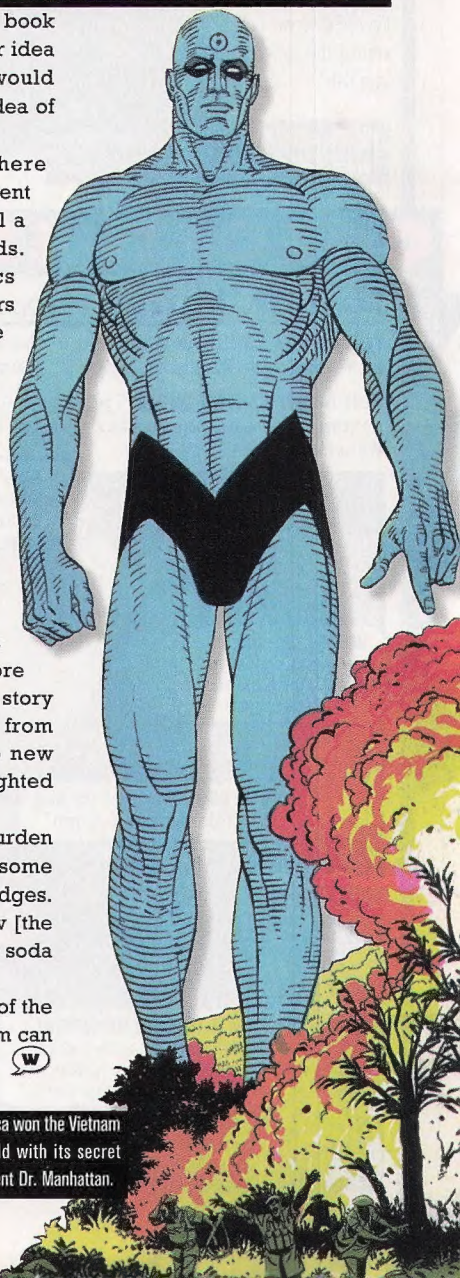
In a very real sense, today's comics are a result of living in the shadow of the *Watchmen*. That might mean they're dark, but it also means the best of them can go toe-to-toe with anything else in literature.

DATELINE

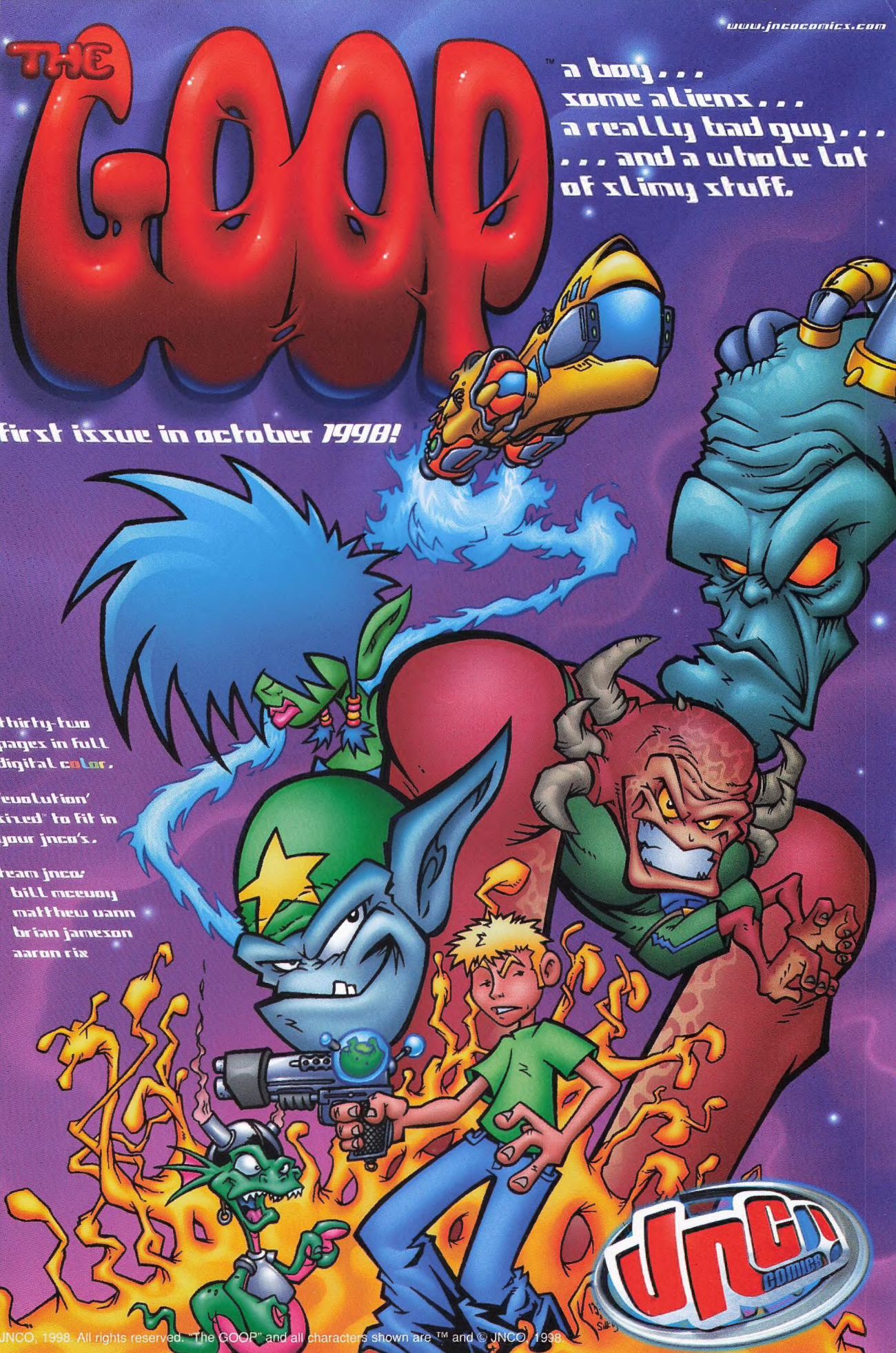
SEPTEMBER 1986

While readers enjoyed the story of ***Watchmen***, moviegoers went to a bizarre new film by David Lynch, **"Blue Velvet"**....Those choosing to stay at home watched David and Maddie fight on **"Moonlighting"**....Berlin topped the charts with "Take My Breath Away" from the "Top Gun" soundtrack....AZT, the new drug made to combat the effects of **AIDS**, is publicly announced.

'MOONLIGHTING'



PULL MY FINGER America won the Vietnam War in *Watchmen*'s world with its secret weapon: the nigh-omnipotent Dr. Manhattan.



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HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR HIS KINGDOM. NOW HE'S GIVING HIS DEATH.

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